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C. W. BARDEEN

EDITOR OF THE SCHOOL BULLETIN

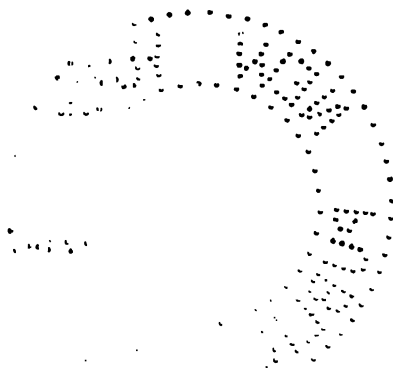
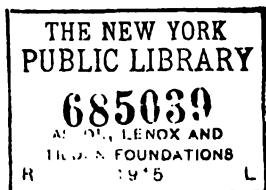


SYRACUSE, N. Y.

C. W. BARDEEN, PUBLISHER

1899

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P R E F A C E

The articles in *The School Bulletin* which are here reprinted were written with a single purpose—to furnish public exercises to be used in schools, each of which should make upon every pupil present a distinct impression of the author named, his life, his character, his writings, and his distinctive place in literature. That they have served this purpose in hundreds of schools the letters that have come in from every direction testify. This volume gives them a more convenient form, and makes them available as a side-help for literature classes.

The articles will be continued in *The School Bulletin*, and will be reprinted annually in volumes like this, until the list embraces the best-known names in American literature.

SYRACUSE, Nov. 29, 1898.

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BOY WAM
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 VASSEL

Bayard Taylor

JANUARY 11

BAYARD TAYLOR

I

Bayard Taylor had an exceedingly thin nose, from which the sun of Africa had so split the skin as to give his face a disdainful expression, which repelled from him many who had not learned the real sweetness of his nature, and



BAYARD TAYLOR, 1825-1878

gave him at times a reputation for coldness and pride which his gentle and generous life in no wise deserved². That misunderstanding was typical of his entire life. Caring only to be considered a poet he was almost

annoyed by the commendations that fell upon him almost exclusively as traveller, lecturer, journalist, and critic. Fond of the scenes of his boyhood and loyal to them, he found himself an object of suspicion and aversion to his neighbors, so that at the last he shook off the dust from his feet and departed from them. An enormous worker, receiving great sums for his books and lectures, he was yet borne down by debts that pressed upon him and that he could not pay.

And when at last he received an appointment that would give him opportunity to complete his literary designs unhampered, giant as he was his health gave way, and he died at the very entrance. He could say with Browning's Paracelsus:

Ah, the curse, the curse, Aprile!

We get so near—so very, very near;

'Tis an old tale: Jove strikes the Titans down,

Not when they set about their mountain piling,

But when another rock would crown the work.

Smyth says:

The really good things of which he was capable were still before him when he died, with more unfulfilled renown and undeveloped growth within him than any other man in American letters².

II

He was born of Quaker ancestry Jan. 11, 1825, at Kennett Square, Chester county, Pennsylvania. He was brought up on the farm, but was from a child a great reader, and wrote poems when he was seven years old. Recollections of his boyhood are given in "The Story of Kennett". He also made



THOMAS BUCHANAN READ, 1823-1872

youthful attempts at drawing and painting, illustrating his first book in colors, making drawings of Byron's and other poems; and in 1839 he wrote to Sartain, the engraver, asking to be received as an apprentice. This mingled love for art and literature resembled in him that in Thomas Buchanan Read, who was born two years earlier within a few miles of him. They afterward became warm friends, and Bayard Taylor is the "Arthur"

whom Read depicted in "Home Pastorals".

III

From 1839 to 1842 he was at Unionville academy, where his verbal memory and his facility in rhymes were chiefly noticeable. He was forever composing acrostics on his fellow students, and caricaturing them in rhymes and in drawings. This pert and nimble spirit of mirth continued with him through life, prompting him to innocent mischief, and making him the sunniest companion in every social group. His "Echo Club and other Literary Diversions" (1872) gives the imitations of authors with which he amused himself in later years.

Much of his life at this time is described in "John Godfrey's Fortunes", which is really a fragment of his autobiography. The discontent with which he went back to the farm is indicated in his poem "John Reed". After a few weeks his father consented to apprentice him to a printer in West Chester, where he became a compositor on the *Village Record*. While here he read German and studied Spanish, and organized a dramatic society. By good fortune some

verses that he had contributed to the *Saturday Evening Post*, particularly the lines "To the Brandywine", brought him to the notice of Rufus W. Griswold, then editor of *Graham's Magazine*, and he was admitted to the choice company of its contributors².

IV

About this time he read Longfellow's "Hyperion", and became eager to travel. Howitt's "Rural Life in Germany" made him believe that the expense was not so great as to be impossible; and as he frequently walked the thirty miles between Kennett and Philadelphia, he was sure that he could travel on foot. He bought the remainder of his apprentice time, succeeded in selling to the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *United States Gazette* 12 letters for \$50 from each in advance, and got \$40 from Mr. Griswold for some manuscript poems. With this \$140 he started for Europe with his cousin and a third companion. His cousin was on his way to complete his education in Germany, and afterwards became principal of the Philadelphia Central high school.

V

They sailed July 1, 1844, paying \$10 each for berths in the second cabin of the packet boat Oxford. After a run through Scotland, London, and Belgium, they went by boat up the Rhine; and after his cousin had settled at Heidelberg, he went to Frankfort, where he remained for several months in a German family, paying for board and room 33 cents a day. He started for Italy on foot by way of the Hartz, Leipzig, Dresden, Prague, and Vienna, but came back from Vienna to Frankfort because he had only \$4.00 left, in which he had to make the 500 miles. Starting again he crossed the Alps, reaching Milan Aug. 21. He made his longest stay in Florence, giving expression to his delight there afterwards in "The Picture of St. John". He became acquainted with Hiram Powers, and so pleased him by verses upon his statue of Eve, that he borrowed \$50 of him, and went on to Rome, where he paid 10 cents a day for his room. On Jan. 12, 1846, he started from Civita Vecchia for Marseilles. He took deck passage, but was so sea-sick that out of pity the captain gave

him a bed in the cabin. He had only \$3.00 to take him to Paris and his shoes had given out so that he could walk but 30 miles a day. After lying in pawn at Lyons waiting for a letter with money he went on to Dieppe and London. His last penny was gone, but he got work upon making catalogues and packing books. He persuaded a captain to take him to America and get part pay after arrival for the passage, and after a voyage of 37 days he reached New York on June 1, 1846.

VI

His letters in the *New York Tribune*, as well as in the *Post* and the *Gazette*, had awakened attention, and he persuaded Wiley & Putnam to publish them, on their agreement to pay him \$100 on every thousand copies sold. N. P. Willis suggested the title "Views Afoot", and wrote the introduction, and the book appeared in 1846. Six editions were sold the first year, and by 1855 twenty editions had been published. Longfellow wrote to him :

The last chapter fills me with great wonder. How could you accomplish so much with such slight

help and appliances? It shows a strength of will, the central fire of all great deeds and words, that must lead you far in whatever you undertake*.

VII

Unquestionably the main interest in his letters had been the fact that it was possible to travel on so little money, for in the entire two years he had spent less than \$500.

The book closes with a chapter of advice and information for pedestrians, in which he says that the only expense which cannot be reduced at will in Europe is that for sleeping. You may live on a crust of bread for a day, but lower than 4 cents for a bed you cannot go. This was the regular price in Germany, but in Italy it varied from 5 to 10 cents, and in France, from Marseilles to Dieppe the charge was 5 cents in all the village inns. He said he usually rose before sunrise, and at the next village would buy a loaf of the hard brown bread with some cheese or butter, or whatever substantial addition could be made at trifling cost, and breakfast on a bank by the roadside, lying at full length on the dewy grass, and using his knapsack for a table. After walking more

than half the distance to be accomplished, with half an hour's rest dinner would be made in the same manner.

Once in Florence his companions went away, leaving him money enough for the three or four days they were absent ; but an unexpected expense consumed nearly all of it, and he had left about three cents a day for his meals. By spending one of these for bread, and the other two for ripe figs, of which a cent would purchase twenty, he managed to make a diminutive breakfast and dinner, being careful not to take much exercise on account of the increase of hunger. But his friends remained two days longer than expected, and he resolved to try one day without eating anything at all. Fortunately the experiment was broken off by the arrival of the absent ones.⁶

VIII

Through all the difficulties of travel he kept a cheerful face to the fore. Once only he says, while waiting six days at Lyons, in gloomy weather and among harsh people, without a sou, and with strong doubt of receiving the money they were waiting for, he

became indifferent as to what might happen, and would have met passively any change for the worse⁵.

But only youth, courage, and abounding health could have carried him through some of his trials. Once his feet became very sore, and after limping along in excruciating pain for a week or two, he filled his boots with brandy, which deadened the wounds so much that he was enabled to go on in a kind of trot, which he kept up, only stopping ten minutes for dinner, till he reached Heidelberg. On boats, he always took the lowest-priced accommodation, and spent miserable nights consumed by fleas and nauseated by smells. This is what he writes of the diligence in which, being no longer able to walk, he rode to Paris, 110 miles for \$1.40.

Twelve persons were packed into a box not large enough for a cow, and no cabinet maker ever dove-tailed the corners of his bureaus tighter than we did our knees and nether extremities. It is my lot to be blessed with abundance of stature, and none but tall persons can appreciate the misery of sitting for hours with their joints in an immovable vise. The closeness of the atmosphere—for the passengers would not permit the windows to be opened for fear of taking cold—combined with loss of sleep, made

me so drowsy that my head was continually falling on my next neighbor⁵.

IX

But “*Views Afoot*” is much more than an itinerary of economical travelling. Europe, like the sea, gives the traveller all that his cup will hold; and Bayard Taylor’s cup, boy as he was, was large enough to take in



HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW,
1807-1882

large draughts of all that is noble and beautiful, both in nature and in art. “If they are reporter’s letters,” says Stedman, “they are those of the poet acting as reporter³.” He had “*Hyperion*”

by heart, and as he followed in Longfellow’s footsteps he saw what Longfellow’s eyes had recorded.

“As I walked across the Main”, he says, “and looked down on the swift stream on its way from the Thuringian forests to join the Rhine, I thought of the time when

Schiller stood there in the days of his early struggle, an exile from his native land, and looking over the bridge, said in the loneliness of his heart 'That water flows not so deep as my sufferings⁵.' "

He had a keen enjoyment of music. When he first heard Rossini's opera "William Tell" he said of the overture :

It begins low and mournful, like the lament of the Swiss over their fallen liberties ; occasionally a low drum is heard, as if to rouse them to action ; and meanwhile the lament swells to a cry of despair : the drums now wake the land, the horn of Uri is heard pealing forth its summoning strains ; and the echoes seem to come back from the distant Alps : the sound then changes for the roar of battle,—the clang of trumpets, drums, and cymbals. The whole orchestra did their best to represent this combat in music, which after lasting a short time changed into the loud, victorious march of the conquerors⁵.

X

Still more remarkable is this untutored boy's description of the impression made upon him when he first heard the opera "Fidelio".

Surrendering myself to the grasp of Beethoven's powerful conception, I read in sounds far more expressive than words, the almost despairing agony of

the strong-hearted, but still tender and womanly Fidelity—the ecstatic joy of the wasted prisoner, when he rose from his hard couch in the dungeon, seeming to feel, in his maniac brain, the presentiment of a bright being who would come to unbind his chains—and the sobbing and wailing, almost human which came from the orchestra, when they dug his grave, by the dim lantern's light. When it was done, the murderer stole into the dungeon, to gloat on the agonies of his victim, ere he gave the death-blow. Then, while the prisoner is waked to reason by that sight, and Fidelity throws herself before the uplifted dagger, rescuing her husband with the courage which love gives to a woman's heart, the storm of feeling which has been gathering in the music swells to a height beyond which it seemed impossible for the soul to pass. My nerves were thrilled till I could bear no more. A mist seemed to come before my eyes and I scarcely knew what followed, till the rescued kneeled together and poured forth in the closing the painful fullness of their joy. I dreaded the sound of voices after the close, and the walk home amid the harsh rattling of vehicles on the rough streets. For days afterwards my brain was filled with a mingled and confused sense of melody, like the half-remembered music of a dream⁵.

XI

He says of himself :

Travelling increases very much one's capacity for admiration. Every beautiful scene appears as

beautiful as if it had been the first ; and although I may have seen a hundred times as lovely a combination of sky and landscape, the pleasure which it awakens is never diminished. This is one of the greatest blessings we enjoy—the freshness and glory which Nature wears to our eyes forever. It shows that the soul never grows old—that the eye of age can take in the impression of beauty with the same enthusiastic joy that leaped through the heart of childhood⁵.

Again he says of the Florentine museum, and it is a happy token of his cheerful view of life :

One chamber is occupied with representations of the plague, of Rome, Milan, and Florence. They are executed with horrible truth to nature, but I regretted afterwards having seen them. There are enough forms of beauty and delight in the world on which to employ the eye without making it familiar with scenes which can only be remembered with a shudder⁵.

XII

His style is usually simple, but now and then he indulges in an elaborate figure, as where, speaking of the circus of Caracalla he says :

The original structure must have been of great size and splendor, but those twin vandals, Time and

Avarice, have stripped away everything but the lofty brick masses, whose nakedness the pitying ivy strives to cover⁵.

Nor does he often reveal his lack of scholarship as in the following :

Still, as one depth of endurance after another was reached, the words of Cicero would recur to me as encouragement—"Perhaps even *this* may hereafter be remembered with pleasure"*

Nor does his enjoyment of Europe shake his preference for America. He says very truly :

In the cold of these European winters, there is, as I observed last year in Germany, a dull, damp chill, quite different from the bracing, exhilarating frost of America. It stagnates the vital principal and leaves the limbs dull and heavy, with a lifeless feeling which can scarcely be overcome by vigorous action⁵.

And again he remarks heartily :

I have seen more beautiful women in one night in a public assembly in America than during the seven months I have been on the continent⁵.

XIII

But the taste for travelling thus once indulged became for a time a master-passion,

* Forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit.

P. Virgilii Maronis Aeneidos, i. 203.

till it might be said of him as Browning said
of Alfred Domett :

What's become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest, or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London-town ?

XIV

On Aug. 28, 1851, he sailed for Liverpool, went by way of London, Heidelberg, and Trieste to Smyrna and Alexandria, spending two years and four months in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor ; then up the Nubian Nile into Ethiopia, and by the White Nile to the country of Shillooks. He was most at home in the Orient. He assumed the garb of the people among whom he happened to live, and seemed to don with the dress the language and the habits of the race².

As at Greenwich fair he had joined in the rather indecorous fun of drawing an imitation watchman's rattle down the backs of the men and women he met, making a noise like the ripping of cloth³, so in the east he

/

When in Rome he did as the Romans 25

entered into the spirit of the people he was among.

He wrote to James T. Fields in 1852 :

I wear the tarboosh, smoke the Persian pipe, and drop cross-legged on the floor with the ease of any tailor whatever. When I went into my bankers' they addressed me in Turkish. The other day at Brousa, my fellow-musselmen indignantly denounced me as damned because I broke the feast of the Ramazan by taking a drink of water in the bazaar. I have gone into the holiest mosques in Asia Minor with perfect impunity. I determined to taste the Orient as it was in reality, not as a mere outsider looking on, and so picked up the Arabic tongue, put on wide trousers, and adopted as many heathen customs as was becoming to a good Christian^s.

XV

From Khartoum he came back to Cairo and Smyrna, rode on horseback through Jerusalem, Damascus, Aleppo, and through Asia Minor to Constantinople, where he arrived July 12, 1852. He went to London, and then again through Spain to India, reaching Bombay Dec. 27. He sent his heavy luggage by steamer and went overland by cart to Indore, Agra, and Delhi,

travelling 2,200 miles in the interior in less than two months².

A letter from the *Tribune* office contained a proposition to accompany Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan. He arrived in Hong Kong March 16, 1853, and joined Commodore Perry at Shanghai. But the rules of the service prevented him from publishing his careful journal, which was delivered to the navy department and still remains among their archives. After four months he was allowed to resign, and reached New York Dec. 20, 1853².

On July 9, 1856, he sailed again for Europe; and in the winter of 1856-7 he took a trip to the far North making a tour of Lapland and travelling 2,200 miles in the interior, 250 by reindeer. He sailed North again in July, seeing the midnight sun on the North Cape and having quite enough of ice and snow.

In December, he sailed for Greece. Later in life he took up the study of Greek, at the age of 50, telling Mr. Howells that he expected to use it in the other world².

In 1862-3 he spent more than a year in



ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING,
1809-1861

Russia, and in February, 1867, he sailed for Europe again, spending more than a year, principally in Florence and Rome.

In Florence he lived in Casa Guidi, whose windows Mrs. Brown-

ing had made famous, and sent to Mr. Browning the poem, "Casa Guidi Windows".

In 1872 he sailed for Germany, going in 1873 to Florence, where he took up his old quarters in Casa Guidi.

In 1874 he wrote letters from Egypt to the *Tribune* and went to Iceland as its representative to report the commemoration of the millennial anniversary of the first settlement of the island. He returned home Sept. 9, 1874.

XVI

But while for all these years he was most widely known as a traveller, he had also done

much work in journalism. When he came back from his first journey he was no longer a boy. He had departed a youth, he returned a man. "He was born," says Berthold Auerbach in his funeral address, "in the New World, and ripened in the old^s."

Toward the end of 1846 he bought a newspaper called the *Phœnixville Gazette*, of which he wrote most of the editorials and all of the book reviews. But his work on that paper was not appreciated in the community; and after a year he bought a release and came to New York, where he accepted a place on Charles Fenno Hoffman's *Literary World* at \$5 a week, teaching at the same time belles-lettres in Miss Green's school for \$4 a week^s.

In "Parnassus in Pillory", a satire published in 1851 there are these lines :

What time Nat Willis, in the daily papers,
Published receipts of shoemakers and drapers,

* * * *

Then Bayard Taylor,—protégé of Natty
Ixion-like, walked into the literati!
And first to proper use his genius put,
Like ballet-girls, by showing "Views Afoot^s."

XVII

At this time the three most prominent



men of letters in New York were Bryant, Halleck, and Willis. Washington Irving was near by at Sunnyside, and James Fenimore Cooper was living at

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, 1794-1878 Cooperstown.

Willis was the best dressed man upon Broadway. Hoffman, best known as the author



of the poem, "Sparkling and Bright", already began to show symptoms of the insanity which marked his later years. Verplanck had published his edition of Shakspeare, and the Duyck-

FITZ-GREENE HALLECK, 1790-1867

kinck Bros. had begun the *Literary World*.

Bayard Taylor was quickly made free of the social life of New York through Willis and Hoffman, attending conversazioni at Mrs. Botta's, and receptions at Mrs. Seba Smith's, which he afterwards satirized in "John Godfrey's Fortunes". His energy and enthusiasm so impressed Horace Greeley that in January, 1848, he was made chief of the miscellaneous and literary department of the New York *Tribune* in place of Oliver Johnson, at \$12 a week⁶.

He was also made temporary editor of the *Union Magazine*; and he was offered the permanent editorship of *Graham's Magazine*, at 1,000 a year, but the financial difficulties of the latter prevented the carrying out of the agreement and he held a merely normal editorship. In December James T. Fields wrote to him :

I stand at a desk where I can gauge a man's depth in the public reading estimation, and I know no youngster who stands dearer than J. B. T., doffing the *J*.

He had hitherto written his name J. Bayard Taylor, but he took this advice, and was afterwards known as Bayard Taylor.

It was a delightful year to him. He wrote fifteen hours a day, resting his soul with poetry after his newspaper work was done. This was the time he wrote his California ballads, spangled with such beauty as only youthful passion can bestow².

XVIII

On June 28, 1849, he sailed for California, to report the gold excitement for the *Tribune*. He spent five months in San Francisco and vicinity, and returned through Mexico, getting back to New York in March, 1850. The record of his travel appears in "El Dorado", and gives a most optimistic view. Joseph Royce says in his "California":

He saw whatever illustrated life, hope, vigor, courage, prosperity.

On his return his salary on the *Tribune* was increased, and he became the owner of three shares of stock.

He was a most rapid writer. He was once surprised at Cedarcroft with an order from the *Tribune* to prepare a sketch of Louis Napoleon to be used in the event of the emperor's abdication. Drawing almost entirely from the source of his memory Taylor

wrote in three days an entire page of the *Tribune*.

In a night and a day he read Victor Hugo's voluminous "*Légende des Siècles*", and wrote for the *Tribune* a review of it which fills 18 pages of his "*Essays and Literary Notes*", and contains five considerable poems which are translated in the metre of the original.

XIX

The early fifties were lecture years, and Bayard Taylor was an excellent lecturer. G. P. R. James said Taylor was the best landscape painter in words that he had ever known. His three lectures upon "*The Arabs*", "*India*", "*Japan and Loo Choo*" were such vivid pictures that they met with great acceptance. Between January and May, 1854, he filled 90 lecture engagements, usually receiving \$50 for each lecture; and in the fall he delivered 130 more².

But he disliked lecturing except for the money it brought. Grace Greenwood tells of an interesting afternoon in the Old Corner Bookstore in Boston, when Taylor, in a weary and somewhat petulant mood, dis-

suaded her from lecturing, saying that it was an occupation full of misery, that he himself detested it, and that an audience



seemed to him no other thing than a collection of cabbage-heads. The difference in point of view was shown when a few minutes later Mr. Emerson congratulated

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, 1803-1882 ed her upon the thought of lecturing, saying there was recompense for all the hardships of the work in the kind words and smiling faces and the bright eyes of the audience².

“I am quite fagged out”, he writes to his mother, “not with speaking, but with travelling, and with being shown up, introduced, questioned, visited, and made to visit, hand-shaken, autographed, honorary membershiped, complimented, censured, quizzed, talked about before my face by people who don’t know me, written about in the papers, displayed on handbills, sold on

tickets, applied to for charitable purposes, and the Lord knows what else²." In February, 1856, his lecture engagements became too heavy for him. He broke down in Boston, and cancelled all his engagements. But in 1857-8 he delivered 270 lectures in 18 months, and in 1874-5 he lectured in six months 130 times.

In 1869, he accepted his election to the non-resident professorship of German literature at Cornell university, and in 1870 delivered his first course of lectures before the university, upon Lessing, Klopstock, Schiller, Goethe, and Humboldt².

XX

He also tried his hand at novel-writing.

In 1863 he published "Hannah Thurston", a story of American Life. The scene of the story is central New York, nominally, but really his native Chester county. The book is a very obvious satire on the fads and isms of the hour, such as spiritualism, vegetarianism, teetotalism, and abolition. 15,000 copies were printed in the fall and winter of 1863, but it inspired much indignation among the reformers². The novel was

translated into Russian and Swedish, and he was encouraged to write a second, "John Godfrey's Fortunes", which was written between March 15 and August 11, and contained 511 pages.

He wrote other novels, "A Strange Friend"; "The Story of Kennett", his best prose work, an idyl of Pennsylvania country life (1866); and "Joseph and his Friends", 1870, an unpleasant story of mean duplicity and painful mistakes. They were all careless works. Bayard Taylor would spend hours on a couplet, matching it to the figure in his mind, but prose was with him purely a means to an end. He built no reputation on it, and was content that it should supply him with the means to live and to write poetry. "Freedom from pecuniary anxiety", he said, "gives my brain a genial glow, a nimble ease, a procreative power, which I never feel at other times".

XXI

Alas, he seldom felt this freedom. His life was one long struggle with obligations it was almost impossible to pay. The same hopeful temperament that encouraged him

to sail for Europe with \$140, and to borrow continually while there, led him through life to spend money long before he had it. When he sailed for Europe in 1851 he had \$3,000 and five shares of stock in the *Tribune*, and when he returned he felt that he had become independent in fortune. The *Tribune* paid good dividends, and his books of travel sold rapidly, 7,000 copies of the "Journey to Central Africa" and a like number of "The Lands of the Saracen" having been ordered before publication. Of "Eldorado" 10,000 copies were sold in America and 30,000 in Great Britain within a fortnight from the date of issue. For editing the "Cyclopaedia of Travel" which he finished between April 1 and June 17 he received \$5,000. His lectures had brought him a great income, and he felt ready to live like a prince. So he became a land owner, buying 120 acres near Kennett², and building "Cedarcroft", at a cost of \$17,000, into which he moved in May, 1860. A picture and description of it are given in *Munsey's Magazine* for January, 1898⁶.

XXII

Here he felt that the dreams of his youth were realized. He wrote "The Poet's Jour-

nal", "The Picture of St. John", "Home Pastorals", "Joseph and His Friends", "The Story of Kennett", etc., and he entertained with princely hospitality Emerson, Curtis, Boker, Stedman, Aldrich, Greeley, and many other artists and authors who came to visit him². But he found himself estranged from his old associates. Most of his neighbors were temperance reformers, and were offended at the wines and liquors which abounded upon his table. He wrote to a friend :

All the appreciation I get come from New England. Pennsylvania gives me nothing but sneers and abuse, and I am a little tired of it³.

His expenses of living were heavy, but as



he needed money more he found it harder to get it.

When the war broke out a mob arose against George William Curtis in Philadelphia, and a storm of indignation

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, 1824-1892 burst in Brooklyn

upon Bayard Taylor for his defence of Curtis. A Southern lecture bureau cancelled its engagements with him, and his fall lecture was unprofitable. As Taylor wrote :

These war times are hard on authors ; the sword of Mars chops in two the strings of Apollo's lyre*

XXIII

A cough that had been troublesome led him in May, 1870, to start for California, to regain his health, and by lecturing to earn much-needed money ; but he was disappointed. The trip proved a failure and he came home several hundred dollars loser. Throughout 1871 he battled with ill-health. The cares of Cedarcroft weighed heavily upon him. The crops failed, the cost of living increased, his own income diminished, debts accumulated, and he was particularly harshly regarded among the Quakers, who were rigidly exact and prompt in money transactions. Finally he put Cedarcroft in the hands of an agent and offered it for sale, going to New York to live. In 1872 he sailed for Germany, discouraged. His new works of real literary merit were not selling well, the books of travel had lost

their popularity, the *Tribune* had put up a large building and no longer paid any dividends ; so he leased his home at Cedarcroft, placed his personal property in storage, and departed².

XXIV

He became more and more oppressed by financial embarrassment. In a letter to Mr. Howells Feb. 6, 1874, he says :

I am engaged in the somewhat desperate task of burying such reputation as I had ten years ago several fathoms deep, and creating a new one. The fact that you returned the poem which I considered much the more important and original of the two was discouraging, coming as it did on the heels of two months of bad news of every possible kind. As for the supercilious fashion in which I am treated by many newspapers, it has long ceased to be an annoyance. I may tell you *now* that for two years past I have had no income from my few *Tribune* shares, and shall have none for two more to come, and am now devouring the last of the proceeds of one which I was forced to sell. Except the pittance of about \$750 a year from all my books I have no income at all except by immediate earning, and nearly all my labor for 18 months past is not yet remunerated. For instance, I spent eight months of last year, averaging eight hours a day, on a history of Germany for schools, which the Appletons have not

yet brought out. Under these restrictions I dare not neglect the more important Goethe studies, and when they are finished I shall hasten home to work for a living until the better time comes. There has been an unusual mental, moral, and physical strain upon me, ever since leaving home, and a cheery word from a friend never had such a value as now⁸.

The publication of the school history was deferred until the close of 1874, and did not prove a success. Another disappointment was the English edition of "Lars, A Pastoral of Norway". It was the first of Taylor's poems that he published in England, and the sale was just 108 copies.

XXV

After his return to America in September, 1874, work crowded upon him. He had become a noted man; the public exacted services from him; his correspondence became enormous, and he neglected none of it, writing scores of letters in a day. He found a great demand for his lectures, and he accepted all engagements in order to rid himself of debt and to obtain freedom to pursue the biographies of Goethe and Schiller. In the first six months after landing in September he lectured 130 times and travelled 15,-

000 miles, clearing \$11,000². At the end of 1875 he was comfortably quartered in New York, and determined to lecture no more, resolving to go back to his newspaper desk. He agreed to edit "Picturesque Europe" for the Appletons, and entered upon daily work in the *Tribune* office, preparing book reviews for the *Tribune*, under the leadership of George Ripley. In 1876 he gave that journal 213 articles of every description, —letters, reviews, and editorials. In 1877 he printed 185 articles, and in the first seven weeks of 1878, 33 more. His last prose work was a childrens' classic, "Boys of Other Countries, Stories for American Boys³". He was cut to the heart that his poetry and the "Life of Goethe"—his darling project, had to be postponed. Tired and fagged as he was, his health began to fail. He lost the alacrity of mind and cheer of manner that had characterised him. He no longer took delight in social recreations, and became grave and abstracted. As his vitality waned his absent-mindedness increased. Unlike his old, intense self, he seemed not to hear the things which were said to him, although he answered mechanically. He wrote to Sidney Lanier, March 12, 1877 :

The fact is I am so weary, fagged, with sore spots under the collar-bone, and all sorts of indescribable symptoms which betoken lessened vitality, that I must piteously beg you to grant me much allowance².

XXVI

At last one of his early hopes was realized.

In 1862, while Taylor was Washington correspondent of the *Tribune*, he was asked to accompany Simon Cameron, the newly appointed minister to Russia, as secretary of the legation, with the implied understanding that he was to succeed him as minister. In September Mr. Cameron left Russia, and Taylor was in charge of affairs until May 7, 1863, when Cassius M. Clay succeeded him, disappointing Taylor in his hope to become minister, though he had had much influence in persuading Russia to continue friendly to the United States throughout the civil war. He blamed Secretary Seward for duplicity in this matter and for not sending him upon a special mission to Persia, and expressed his opinion of Mr. Seward in the sonnet entitled "A Statesman". He wrote another sonnet entitled "A President", giving vent to equal indignation against President Johnson²

XXVII

On Aug. 7, 1877, he wrote to Prof. J. Morgan Hart:

My biography of Goethe is my soul-absorbing interest, and *that alone* impels me, now, to await the pleasure of the government, which may either give or take away my chance of completing the great design within the next two or three years².

On Feb. 15, 1878, President Hayes sent his name to the senate as minister to Germany. Until he sailed on April 11 he was overwhelmed with receptions and dinners. He was cordially received in Germany, the crown prince waiving the customary formalities of presentation, saying that Bayard Taylor needed no introduction in Germany. The round of dinners that preceded his departure had told upon him, and he suffered intense pain, which the physicians located in the colon; which led Taylor to groan "Oh that this would come to a period!"

On Dec. 17 he visibly failed; on the 19th his mind wandered and he was restless; he slept fitfully; at one instant he looked up with a glance of surprise, and in a semi-whisper said, "I must be away." They were his last words.

XXVIII

We have said that Bayard Taylor's one ambition was to be a poet. Nothing kindled his pride and his pleasure like praise of his poetry, and he was never more delighted than when in Iceland he was called "the American skald". His fame as a traveller and a journalist was slightly valued, and the superficial repute that came with lecturing and with editing brought him regret rather than satisfaction^s. In his "Epistle from Mount Tmolus" he refers to

"The curse

Or blessing, which has clung to me from birth—
The torment and the ecstasy of verse^s."

What then shall be said of his poetry?

His first volume "*Ximena*" is imitative,

and not indicative of unusual promise. He afterwards regretted its publication. His "*Rhymes of Travel, Ballads, and Poems*" were approvingly criticised by Poe, who



EDGAR ALLAN POE, 1809-1847

speaks of his "glowing imagination", and "sonorous, well-balanced rhythm", but Stedman thinks them not remarkable.

In the Californian ballads, however, Stedman finds a fresh atmosphere, and a ring in their tone, while his "Romances" (1851) contains pieces that rank among the best he wrote, with a style much matured, and most genuinely his own.

"Poems of the Orient" contains the best work of his purely lyrical period, and may justly be characterized as vivid, spontaneous, harmonious in tone, and artistic in execution. Of all the regions which Taylor now had traversed, the Orient seemed most nearly to touch his nature³.

XXIX

"Beyond a doubt" says Smyth, "the magnificent 'Bedouin Song' is a distinct addition to the imperishable things of our literature."

BEDOUIN SONG

From the Desert I come to thee
On a stallion shod with fire;
And the winds are left behind
In the speed of my desire.

Under thy window I stand,
And the midnight hears my cry :
I love thee, I love but thee,
With a love that shall not die
 *Till the sun grows cold,
 And the stars are old,
 And the leaves of the Judgment
 Book unfold !*

Look from thy window and see
 My passion and my pain ;
I lie on the sands below,
 And I faint in thy disdain.
Let the night-winds touch thy brow
 With the heat of my burning sigh,
And melt thee to hear the vow
 Of a love that shall not die
 *Till the sun grows cold,
 And the stars are old,
 And the leaves of the Judgment
 Book unfold !*

XXX

His orientalities had what Moore and Southey and Monckton Milnes, and Victor Hugo lacked, a profound and vital appreciation of the life of the East. Ross Browne's Syrian dragoman, when he listened to the reading of "Hassan to his Mare", sprang up with tears in his eyes, and protested that

the Arabs talked just that way to their horses².

HASSAN TO HIS MARE

Come, my beauty ! come, my desert darling !
On my shoulder lay thy glossy head !
Fear not, though the barley-sack be empty,
Here's the half of Hassan's scanty bread.

Thou shalt have thy share of dates, my beauty !
And thou know'st my water-skin is free,
Drink and welcome, for the wells are distant,
And my strength and safety lies in thee.

Bend thy forehead now, to take my kisses !
Lift in love thy dark and splendid eye :
Thou art glad when Hassan mounts the saddle—
Thou art proud he owns thee : so am I.

Let the Sultan bring his boasted horses,
Prancing with their diamond-studded reins ;
They, my darling, shall not match thy fleetness
When they course with thee the desert-plains !

Let the Sultan bring his famous horses,
Let him bring his golden swords to me,—
Bring his slaves, his eunuchs, and his harem ;
He would offer them in vain for thee.

We have seen Damascus, O my beauty !
And the splendor of the Pashas there :
What's their pomp and riches ? Why, I would not
Take them for a handful of thy hair !

Khaled sings the praises of his mistress,
And, because I've none, he pities me :
What care I if he should have a thousand,
Fairer than the morning ? *I have thee.*

He will find his passion growing cooler,
Should her glance on other suitors fall ;
Thou wilt ne'er, my mistress and my darling,
Fail to answer at thy master's call.

XXXI

In 1850 he began to meditate a poem whose theme was pictorial art. It was published in 1865 under the title "The Picture of St. John", and immediately gave him an assured place among the poets of America. Longfellow called it "a great poem,—noble, sustained, and beautiful from beginning to end ;" Lowell decided that no American poem except "The Golden Legend" could match it in finish and sustained power ; and Joseph Knight in the *Fortnightly Review* for March, 1867, said :

He has not the earnestness of Longfellow, the wit of Lowell, or the breadth of Holmes, but in delicacy of workmanship and in wealth of suggestion he transcends them all³.

This marks the close of the second stage of Bayard Taylor's development as a poet.

He was soon absorbed in the study of Goethe, and his mind was taking the cast of thought that was to determine his future literary product, the first fruit of which was "*The Masque of the Gods*" (1872). This was an inspiration, written at a white heat in four days, and he always regarded it as his best work².

He read the Phi Beta Kappa poem at Harvard, "*The American Legend*", Emerson pronouncing it the best poem that had been delivered there².

XXXII

He never realized his conception more completely than in the idyllic narrative poem "*Lars,—A Pastoral of Norway*", which, although published in 1873, had been silently fixing itself to form for six years. It realized his ideal, and won a place in critical esteem beside "*Evangeline*", and the best of Tennyson's corresponding verse².

"*Home Pastorals, Ballads, and Lyrics*" (1875) contains also some of his odes. The effect of his reading of the Centennial ode was electrical and wonderful. He was crowded upon by the spontaneous congratu-

lation of the people, and his ears were dinned with the applause of the ten thousand who had heard and not heard the strains that, without manuscript or notes, he had repeated².

Besides "The Masque of the Gods" he wrote two other dramas, "The Prophet", and "Prince Deukalion". The last, which is also his last book, gives his final conception of life and of the universe. Within a month of its appearance he was dead².

XXXIII

An English critic says that "the main drawback to the widespread acceptance of Bayard Taylor's poetry as a whole is its perpetual diffuseness. His most ambitious productions are marred by a ceaseless effort to overstrain his powers." There is truth in this acute, though correct criticism that was the keenest disappointment of Taylor's life. Exhausting and multiform labors perpetually forbade him to refine his subtle sense of poetry and to overtake the splendid ideal that he pursued. The permanent works of the human spirit seem to require solitude and repose for their creation².

Involved in the expenses of Cedarcroft he never knew the enormous value of freedom. He was always drawing on the strength of to-morrow to do the work of to-day^s.

Smyth says :

His chief defect seems to be a lack of spontaneity. His poetry is all *intended*. It seem to be built up by the intellect. The reader searches in vain for an escape from the intellectual. He never gives rein to the spirit. In the "Bedouin Song", "The Song of the Camp", "Euphorion", he rises very near the heaven of highest song^s.

Stedman says :

His gift was genuine and inherent, but he became too much diffused; he strove to survey too large a precinct, and it was surprising how far, in more than one direction, he made his lines extend. With all his facility and purpose, he found himself in a too arduous struggle between the duty of the hour and the still higher work fashioned after "the pattern which was shewed him in the Mount".

XXXIV

Like Longfellow and Bryant, he gave much of the last work of his life to translation, but he surpassed them both, for his "Faust" is universally recognized as the best in English.

He had a generous scheme of living, and he had a severely high ideal ; with splendid health and courage he struggled to win the one, and to realize the other. The swiftest runner could hardly hope to win in such a race².

He conceived the idea in 1850, began it in 1863, and finished it in 1870³.

“Genius”, says Carlyle, “is the capacity for taking infinite pains.” Only a fellow of the craft can know the all unestimated sum of things that went to the magnificent success of Taylor’s rendering of the great German poem. Probably no foreigner had a more thorough mastery of the German language. He mastered most of the prodigious literature that has accumulated about the poem. He familiarized himself with the ramifications of the legend in history and art.

He believed that poetry required for successful translation the original metre, and he so rendered “Faust”. Stedman says its merits are sympathetic quality, rapid poetic handling, and fidelity to text. Over every word he pondered with the minutest

care,—twenty or thirty synonyms for every chief word in a quatrain were hunted up, and hours, days, and weeks were spent in making the crooked word lie smooth. He says that the resonance of the original can be preserved only when the measure is clearly marked, and the vowel harmony imitated^s. It is a splendid achievement, and no doubt his most enduring work.

XXXV

He was twice married. In 1850 he married Mary Agnew, who from a little girl had been his sweetheart : but she was known to be near death, and within two months she was with the angels.

When travelling upon the Nile he had met a German named August Bufleb, and a most affectionate friendship had grown up between them. In September, 1855 he received a letter from Mr. Bufleb giving him a bit of property in Gotha. He went there in August, 1856, and found a house furnished in antique style, with everything in place, including even, tea, sugar, and beer. Here he became acquainted with Marie Hansen, a niece of Mrs. Bufleb, and daughter of the

eminent astronomer, whom he married Oct. 27, 1857. For 21 years she was his beloved wife and fellow-worker, and she joined Hosace Scudder in editing his "Life and Letters".

XXXVI

Of his appearance Stoddard says :

I have before me now a vision of him in his young manhood, tall, erect, active looking, and manly, with an aquiline nose, bright, loving eyes, and the dark, ringletted hair with which we endow in ideal the poet. There was a kindness and a courtesy in his greeting that went straight to my heart and assured me that I had found a friend⁶.

In Parton's *Life of Horace Greeley*", he is thus described :

Pale, delicate-featured, with a curling beard and subdued mustache, slight in figure, and dressed with care, he has as little the aspect of an adventurous traveller, as much the air of a nice young gentleman, as can be imagined⁷.

XXXVII

Longfellow wrote touchingly when he died :

Dead he lay among his books !
The peace of God was in his looks.

As the statues in the gloom,
Watch o'er Maximilian's tomb,

So those volumes from their shelves
Watched him, silent as themselves.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich wrote :

BAYARD TAYLOR

In other years—lost youth's enchanted years,
Seen now, and evenmore, through blinding tears
And empty longing for what may not be—
The Desert gave him back to us ; the Sea
Yielded him up ; the icy Norland strand
Lured him not long, nor that soft German air
He loved could keep him. Ever his own land
Fettered his heart and brought him back again.
What sounds are these of farewell and despair
Borne on the winds across the wintry main !
What unknown way is this that he is gone,
Our Bayard, in such silence and alone ?
What new strange quest has tempted him once
more
To leave us ? Vainly standing by the shore,
We strain our eyes. But patience ! when the soft,
Spring gales are blowing over Cedarcroft,
Whitening the hawthorn ; when the violets bloom
Along the Brandywine, and overhead
The sky is blue as Italy's, he will come . . .
In the wind's whisper, in the swaying pine,
In song of bird and blossoming of vine,
And all fair things he loved ere he was dead !

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James Russell Lowell

FEBRUARY 22

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

I

"In a liberal sense," says Stedman, "somewhat as Emerson stands for American thought, the poet Lowell has become our representative man of letters¹¹."

And yet he failed perhaps rather more than Bayard Taylor in reaching the possibilities of achievement.

Posterity will remember him best for the "Biglow Papers", and "Sir Launfal's Vision", both written in 1848. His next forty-three years were fuller of promise than of accomplishment².

In poetry, in humor, and in criticism, the best work this country has produced is his. Yet he was not our greatest poet, our greatest humorist, or our greatest critic. He

showed what he could do, but he never half tried. In his own words :

There seem nowadays to be two sources of literary inspiration—fulness of mind and emptiness of pocket.

Fulness of mind he had, but alas he was born with a full pocket, and though for a time he had to work for his daily bread, he soon had a comfortable income as a Harvard professor, and ceased to write for bread. Every thing that lineage, culture, wealth, and society could bestow was his without a struggle,—and he never struggled. Sometimes the frenzy seized him, as when he wrote “*Sir Launfal*” in forty-eight hours, almost without food or sleep. The “*Commemoration Ode*”, considered by critics his finest work, was written in a single night, and the “*Fable for Critics*” in a week¹. But as a rule he was a writer always about to do great things, but seldom getting down to it. He could not read his class poem because he had been suspended for laziness, and his early poems suffered because he was too indolent to give them polish. Had he been born in obscurity, and forced to win what from

birth was lavished on him, his might have been among the proudest names in universal literature.

II

He was born in Cambridge, Mass., Feb. 22, 1819. The city of Lowell got its name from one of his ancestors ; another founded the Lowell lectures in Boston. His father was a clergyman, unusually beloved and of high culture. He was the youngest of the household, a handsome boy, and his mother's darling.

He entered Harvard at 15, where he was secretary of the Hasty Pudding Club, began to pick up nice editions of favorite authors, and was made editor of the college magazine. But he so neglected his recitations, that in 1838 was suspended, and lived for a time in Concord. He wrote the class poem here, but as his suspension continued he was unable to read it, and its publication in pamphlet form was the first of his books.

III

He thought some of the ministry, and began studying law ; then looked for a place in a store, thinking of becoming a business

man. Then he heard Daniel Webster plead, and decided once more to become a lawyer. Three months later he writes that he has quitted the law forever, and tries lecturing. At Concord they gave him \$4 for a lecture, and he wished they would ask him to lecture in Cambridge, where they paid \$15, or in Lowell, where they paid \$25. In April, 1839, he has entered the counting room ; on May 21 he begins law studies again ; on June 28 he wishes some publisher would get out a volume of poems for him, so that he could get paid for his contributions ; on July 22 he still determines to fit himself for the law, but does not believe he shall practise : "above all things", he says, "should I love to be able to sit down and do something literary for the rest of my natural life."

On Aug. 4, he writes to George Loring :

George, before I die your heart shall be gladdened by seeing your wayward, vain, and too often selfish friend do something that shall make his name honored. As Sheridan once said, it's in me, and—(we'll skip the oath) it shall come out.

IV

In the summer of 1840 he took his degree as bachelor of laws, and as his father gave up most of his property to make good the bankruptcy of another son, and he became engaged to marry, it became a serious question with him how to earn a living.

He had been contributing under his own name and under the pseudonym of "Hugh Perceval" to the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, the *Southern Literary Messenger*, and other periodicals, and he published a little volume called "A Year's Life", which gave him a place among American poets. He gave more time to literature than to law, and in 1842 started a periodical called *The Pioneer*, which lived only three months, and left him considerably in debt.

He spent that winter in New York, and got a few acquaintances. In 1843 he published another volume of poems, containing the best of what he had written since the former. He published a volume of "Conversations on Some of the Old Poets", and in December, 1844, felt encouraged to marry, and did so. He was a regular contributor

to the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, formerly edited by Whittier, and spent the winter in Philadelphia.

V

In 1846 he made an engagement to write for the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, of New York, at a salary of \$500 a year, and sent articles to it for nearly four years. In 1848 he published the first of the "Biglow Papers", the "Fable for Critics", and "Sir Launfal's Vision".

In 1855 he was appointed to succeed Longfellow as professor of modern languages and literature in Harvard college, and went to Germany to make preparation.

In September, 1856, he began his work as professor, but, like Longfellow (xxiii.99), he found its exactions irksome, and the demands made upon him such as to interfere more or less with the free exercise of his poetic faculty. His lectures during the twenty years which he held a professorship had a wide range through the field of modern literature, and were such as college students have rarely had the good fortune to hear¹.

VI

From 1872 to 1874 he was in Europe, receiving honors from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and welcomed everywhere by men of letters².

President Hayes, at the suggestion, it is said, of Howells, in 1877 offered to Lowell the Austrian mission, which he declined. But he subsequently accepted the appointment to Spain, possibly because he was then engaged in the study of Cervantes and the Spanish drama. In 1880 he was transferred from Madrid to London. He was then sixty years old. His fame rose, full-orbed upon Great Britain, and he had a reception seldom given to a stranger. He was again made welcome by men eminent in letters and in social rank, and was especially honored by the Queen. On the accession of President Cleveland in 1885 he retired².

He had an inherited tendency to gout, and suffered at times severely ; even as far back as 1857 there were times when the pain seized the soles of his feet so sharply that he would lift them spasmodically high in air, with half-suppressed groans that were heart-aching to hear.

He died on Aug. 12, 1891, after long and terrible suffering.

VII

Mr. Lowell's first verses attracted little attention, and his surpassing ability was not suspected until he began to write "The Big-low Papers". In his own words :

Very far from being a popular author under my own name, so far, indeed, as to be almost unread, I found the verses of my pseudonyme copied everywhere.

The occasion was political. Even in the days of the Mexican War he was a mug-wamp. He says of himself :

I always hated politics in the ordinary sense of the word and I am not likely to grow fonder of them* [?], now that I have learned how rare it is to find a man who can keep principle clear from party and personal prejudice, or can conceive the possibility of another's doing so.

He thus expresses his opinion of political management :

So they march in processions, an' git up hooraws,
An' tramp thru the mud fer the good o' the cause,
An' think they're a kind o' fulfillin' the prophecies,

* Compare "he *don't*", which occurs twice in "A Fable for Critics".

Wen they're on'y jest changin' the holders of offices;
Ware A sot afore, B is comf'tably seated,
One humbug's victor'ous an' t'other defeated,
Each honnable doughface gits jest wut he axes,
An' the people,—their annooal soft-sodder an' taxes.

VIII

But he had married a zealous abolitionist
whom he deeply loved, and he was indignant
that Massachusetts should abet a war of
which the main purpose was the extension of
slavery.

'Twouldn't suit them Southern fellers,
They're a dreffle graspin' set,
We must ollers blow the bellers
Wen they want their irons het.

There was a rage just then for enlisting,
and he represents "Hosea Biglow" as ridi-
culing the popular craze.

Ef any thin's foolisher and moor dicklus than
militerry gloary it is milishy gloary.

IX

Of these papers the third especially caught
the popular ear :

Parson Wilbur sez *he* never heerd in his life
Thet th' Apostles rigged out in their swaller-tail
coats,

An' marched round in front of a drum an' a fife,
To git some on 'em office, 'an some on 'em votes ;

But John P.

Robinson, he

Sez they didn't know everythin' down in Judee.

The refrain proved so taking that he tried
it again :

Sez John C. Calhoun, sez he ;—

"Yes," sez Davis, o' Miss.,

"The perfection o' bliss

Is in skinnin' that same old coon," sez he.

And in the second series

Who made the law thet hurts, John, .

Heads I win,—ditto tails?

"J. B." was on his shirts, John,

Unless my memory fails.

Ole Uncle S., sez he, "I guess

(I'm good at thet)," sez he,

"Thet sause for goose ain't *jest* the juice

For ganders with J. B.,

No more'n with you or me !"

X

As a type of the politician of the day, he
gives us the speech of Increase D. O'Phace
[Doughface], Esq:

I'm willin' a man should go tollable strong
Agin' wrong in the abstract, fer that kind o' wrong
Is ollers unpop'lar an' never gits pitied,

Because it's a crime no one never committed ;
But he mus' n't be hard on partickler sins,
Coz then he'll be kickin' the people's own shins.

Here he introduces the “hifalutin” oratory of the day :

Ef it aint jest the thing thet's well pleasin' to God,
It makes us thought highly on elsewhere abroad ;
The Rooshian black eagle looks blue in his eerle
An' shakes both his heads wen he hears o' Monteery ;
In the Tower Victory sets, all of a fluster,
An' reads, with locked doors, how we won Cherry
Buster ;

An' old Phillip Lewis—thet come an' kep' school
here

For the mere sake o' scorin' his ryalist ruler
On the tenderest part of our kings *in futuro*—
Hides his crown underneath an old shut in his
bureau,

Breaks off in his brags to a suckle o' merry kings,
How he often hed hided young native Amerrikins,
An' turnin' quite faint in the midst of his fooleries,
Sneaks down stairs to bolt the front door o' his
Toolerles.

XI

We have too, “The Pious Editor's Creed” :

I *don't* believe in princerple,
But O, I *du* in interest ;

and a “Letter from a Candidate for the
Presidency” :

Ez fer the war, I go agin it,—
 I mean to say I kind o' du,—
 Thet is, I mean thet, bein' in it,
 The best way wuz to fight it thru ;
 Not but wut abstract war is horrid,
 I sign to thet with all my heart,—
 But civlyzation *does* git forrid
 Sometimes upon a powder-cart. * * *

 Ez to my princerples, I glory
 In hevin' nothin' o' the sort ;
 I aint a Wig, I aint a Tory,
 I'm just a candidate in short.

XII

A Second Series of these papers was published during the Civil War, the following extract from a supposed message of Jeff. Davis being a characteristic passage :

I say nothin' henders our takin' our place
 Ez the very fus'-best o' the whole human race,
 A spittin' tobacker ez proud ez you please
 On Victory's bes' carpets, or loafin' at ease
 In the Tool'ries front-parlor, discussin' affairs
 With our heels on the backs o' Napoleon's new
 chairs,
 An' princes a-mixin' our cocktails an' slings,—
 Excep', wal, excep' jest a very few things,
 Sech ez navies an' armies an' wherewith to pay,
 An' gittin' our sogers to run t' other way,

An' not be too over-pertickler in tryin'
To hunt up the very las' ditches to die in.

XIII

All this was poetry with a moral purpose.
He says of himself in "A Fable for Critics":
There is Lowell, who's striving Parnassus to climb
With a whole bale of *isms* tied together with rhyme.
He might get on alone, spite of brambles and
boulders,
But he can't with that bundle he has on his shoulders.
The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh reaching
Till he learns the distinction 'twixt singing and
preaching;
His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty
well
But he'd rather by half make a drum of the shell,
And rattle away till he's old as Methusalem,
At the head of a march to the last new Jerusalem.

The

Zekle crep' up, quite unbeknown,
was thrown off carelessly in response to the
printer's request for something to fill out a
page, *and the last stanzas were thrown away
into absolute oblivion* because the printer
needed no more for his page.

XIV

"A Fable for Critics" was published
anonymously with this title page:

READER! *walk up at once (it will soon be too late)*
and buy at a perfectly ruinous rate

A

FABLE FOR CRITICS;

OR, BETTER,

*(I like, as a thing that the reader's first fancy may strike,
 an old-fashioned title-page,
 such as presents a tabular view of the volume's contents,)*

A GLANCE

AT A FEW OF OUR LITERARY PROGENIES

(Mrs. Malaprop's word)

FROM

THE TUB OF DIOGENES;

A VOCAL AND MUSICAL MEDLEY,

THAT IS,

A SERIES OF JOKES

By A Wonderful Quiz,

*who accompanies himself with a rub-a-dub-dub, full of spirit and
 grace, on the top of the tub,*

Set forth in October, the 31st day,
 In the year '48, G. P. Putnam, Broadway.

XV

One has only to compare this with Pope's "Dunciad," or Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers", to appreciate how delicate a task was undertaken, and how well it was accomplished. There is no sounder



A. BRONSON ALCOTT, 1799-1838

criticism for practical use in a literature class than much of this. Take for instance the comparison of Emerson with Carlyle, or the perfect picture of Hawthorne, or note

how these two lines paint Alcott to us :

With the Parthenon nigh, and the olive-trees o'er him,

And never a fact to perplex him or bore him.

This power of depicting with a few bold strokes what most writers have to elaborate is characteristic.

Thus in "The Cathedral" he meets at dinner in Chartres three Englishmen who supposed he was French,

And, clubbing in one mess their lack of phrase,
Set their best man to grapple with the Gaul.
" *Esker vous ate a nabitang?* " he asked ;
" I never ate one ; are they good ? " asked I ;
Whereat they stared, then laughed, and we were
frlends.

Every book of travel tells a story like
this, but where else is it told so completely
in so few words ?

XVI

Another old story is that of the monk
who said reflectively as he showed to visitors
the paintings in one of the great cathedrals :
" We who show these pictures and you who
look at them are but a passing show. Gene-
ration follows generation, and we who stand
here for a moment are but as the brook that
floweth by, while these faces look down, ever
the same,—calm, fixed, enduring, till some-
times I fancy 'tis they who are the reality
and we the shadows."

How admirably in this same poem has
Lowell expressed this thought :

I stood before the triple northern port,
Where dedicated shapes of saints and kings,
Stern faces bleared with immemorial watch,
Looked down benignly grave and seemed to say,

*Ye come and go incessant ; we remain
Safe in the hallowed quiet of the past ;
Be reverent, ye who fit and are forgot,
Of faith so nobly realized as this.*

XVII

Nor can one forbear to quote that perfect contrast of the two styles of architecture :

The Grecian gluts me with its perfectness,
Unanswerable as Euclid, self contained,
The one thing finished, in this hasty world,
Forever finished though the barbarous pit,
Fanatical on hearsay, stamp and shout
As if a miracle could be encored.
But ah ! this other, this that never ends,
Still climbing, luring fancy still to climb,
As full of morals half-divined as life,
Graceful, grotesque, with ever new surprise
Of hazardous caprices sure to please,
Heavy as nightmare, airy-light as fern,
Imagination's very self in stone !

XVIII

This power of course finds frequent exercise in the forcible statement of familiar truths :

But chance is like an amberill,—it don't take twice to lose it.—*Biglow Papers*.

My gran'ther's rule was safer 'n 'tis to crow :
Don't never prophesy—unless ye know.—Ib.

Change jes' for change, is like them big hotels
When they shift plates, an' let ye live on smells.—*Ib.*
An' ylt there ain't a man thet needs be told.
Thet Now's the only bird lays eggs o' gold.—*Ib.*
Like rockets druv by their own burnin',
All leap an' light.—*Ib.*

Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare ;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me.

—*Sir Launfal.*

XIX

He has given us pictures here and there
of the school-room.

If any tyro found a name too tough,
And looked at her, pride furnished skill enough ;
She nerved her larynx for the desperate thing,
And cleared the five-barred syllables at a spring.

—*Biglow Papers.*

Ther' 's a small school'us' there where four roads
meet,

The door-steps hollered out by little feet,
An' side posts carved with names whose owners
grew

To gret men, some on 'em, an' deacons, tu ;
't ain't used no longer, coz the town hez gut
A high-school, where they teach the Lord knows
wut :

Three-story larnin' 's pop'lar now ; I guess
We thriv' ez wal on jes' two stories less,
For it strikes me ther' 's sech a thing ez sinnin'
By overloadin' children's underplannin'.—*Id.*

XX

He has positive ideas as to literary style, insisting especially on simplicity. Parson Wilbur thinks the sweetest smell in nature is not new-mown hay or a baby's breath, but *fresh air* ; and while he deplores the writing of verses on "My Mother's Grave" while that excellent lady is still alive and in excellent health, he remarks :

Nevertheless, the writing of verses is a good rhetorical exercitation, as teaching us what to shun most carefully in prose. For prose bewitched is like window-glass with bubbles in it, distorting what it should show with pellucid veracity.

Hosea Biglow speaks thus of introductions :

Turnin' of it over I reclected how they used to put wut they called Argymunce onto the frunts of poymns, like poorches afore housen whare you could rest ye a spell whilst you was concludin' whether yu'd go in or not espeshully where tha wuz darters, though I most allus found it the best plan to go in fust and think afterwards an' the girls likes it best tu.

XXI

Quotations like this might be multiplied :

Ah, men do not know how much strength is in
poise,

That he goes the farthest who goes far enough,
And that all beyond that is just bother and stuff.

—*Fable for Critics.*

An' his gret sword behind him sloped away
Long 'z a man's speech that dunno what to say.

—*Biglow Papers.*

Words, if you keep 'em, pay their keep,
But gabble's the short road to ruin ,
It's gratis, (*gals half price*), but cheap
At no rate, ef it henders doin'. — *Ib.*

The'ry thinks Fact a pooty thing,
An' wants the banns read right ensuin' ;
But Fact wun't noways wear the ring
'Thout years o' settin' up an' wooln'. — *Ib.*

In the Biglow Papers he even goes so far
as to prefer the quaint dialect of the New
England farmers :

I *ken* write long-tailed, ef I please,—
But when I'm jokin', no, I thankee ;
Then, 'fore I know it, my idees
Run helter-skelter into Yankee.

* * *

An' yit I love th' unhighschool'd way
Ol' farmers had when I was younger ;

Their talk was meatier, an' 'ould stay,
While book-froth seems to whet your hunger.

Yet he is careful to discriminate between
provincialism and slang.

Slang is always vulgar, because it is not a natural
but an affected way of talking, and all mere tricks
of speech or writing are offensive.

XXII

But Mr. Lowell is primarily a poet of
nature. His best work, and his verses that
will endure, are his descriptions. His is not
the cold admiration of Bryant,* who seems
to admire Nature less than he admires him-
self for admiring her, but the passionate
warmth of a lover.

Hosea Biglow declares :

Nor th' airth don't git put out with me
Thet love her 'z though she was a woman ;
Why, th' ain't a bird upon the tree
But half forgives my bein' human.

And again in "Under the Willows" :

I care not how men trace their ancestry,
To ape or Adam ; let them please their whim ;
*But I in June am midway to believe
A tree among my far progenitors,*

* (There's no doubt that he stands in supreme ice-olation.)
—*A Fable for Critics.*

Such sympathy is mine with all the race,
Such mutual recognition vaguely sweet
There is between us. Surely there are times
When they consent to own me of their kin,
And condescend to me, and call me cousin,
Murmuring faint lullabies of eldest time,
Forgotten, and yet dumbly felt with thrills
Moving the lips, though fruitless of the words.
And I have many a lifelong leafy friend,
Never estranged nor careful of my soul,
That knows I hate the axe, and welcomes me
Within his tent as if I were a bird,
Or other free companion of the earth,
Yet undegenerate to the shifts of men.

XXIII

There will never be a generation of English-speaking people who will not quote from
"Sir Launfal" when the June-days come :

And what is so rare as a day in June ?
Then, if ever, come perfect days.

But there are other descriptions of June
worthy to stand by it, like Hosea Biglow's
"Sunthin' in the Pastoral Line". Who can
forget his bobolink :

June's bridesman, poet o' the year,
Gladness on wings, the bobolink, is here :
Half-hid in tip-top apple-blooms he swings,

Or climbs against the breeze with quiverin' wings,
Or, givin' way to 't in a mock despair,
Runs down a brook o' laughter, thru the air.

And again in "Under the Willows":

The bobolink has come, and like the soul
Of the sweet season vocal in a bird,
Gurgles in ecstasy we know not what
Save June! Dear June! Now God be praised for
June.

* * * * *

But June is full of invitations sweet,
Forth from the chimney's yawn and thrice-read
tomes

To leisurely delights and sauntering thoughts
That brook no ceiling narrower than the blue.
The cherry, drest for bridal, at my pane
Brushes, then listens, *Will he come?* The bee,
All dusty as a miller, takes his toll
Of powdery gold, and grumbles. What a day
To sun me and do nothing! *Nay, I think*
Merely to bask and ripen is sometimes
The student's wiser business; the brain
That forages all climes to line its cells,
Ranging both worlds on lightest wings of wish,
Will not distil the juices it has sucked
To the sweet substance of pellucid thought,
Except for him who hath the secret learned
To mix his blood with sunshine and to take
The winds into his pulses.

XXIV

Here is a poem of his that every school-child should commit to memory among his earliest treasures :

THE BEGGAR

A beggar through the world am I,—
From place to place I wander by.
Fill up my pilgrim's scrip for me,
For Christ's sweet sake and charity !

A little of thy steadfastness,
Rounded with leafy gracefulness,
Old oak, give me,—
That the world's blasts may round me blow,
And I yield gently to and fro,
While my stout-hearted trunk below
And firm-set roots unshaken be.

Some of thy stern, unyielding might,
Enduring still through day and night
Rude tempest-shock and withering blight,—
That I may keep at bay
The changeful April sky of chance
And the strong tide of circumstance,—
Give me, old granite gray,

Some of thy pensiveness serene,
Some of thy never-dying green,
Put in this scrip of mine,—
That griefs may fall like snow-flakes light,

And deck me in a robe of white,
Ready to be an angel bright,—
O sweetly mournful pine.

A little of thy merriment,
Of thy sparkling, light content,
Give me, my cheerful brook,—
That I may still be full of glee
And gladness where'er I be,
Though fickle fate hath prisoned me
In some neglected nook.

Ye have been very kind and good
To me, since I've been in the wood ;
Ye have gone nigh to fill my heart ;
But good by, kind friends, every one,
I've far to go ere set of sun ;
Of all good things I would have part,
The day was high ere I could start,
And so my journey's scarce begun.

Heaven help me ! how could I forget
To beg of thee, dear violet !
Some of thy modesty,
That blossoms here as well, unseen,
As if before the world thou 'dst been,
O, give, to strengthen me.

XXV

His poem, “The Present Crisis”, the longest of the American poems which the Regents require to be committed to memory

("Regents' Selections in American Literature", pp. 16-22), contains the stanza quoted by Charles Sumner in that celebrated speech in the senate on the crime against Kansas that provoked the assault of Preston Brooks :
 For humanity sweeps onward ; where to-day the
 martyr stands

On the morrow crouches Judas, with the silver in his
 hands.

Far in front the cross stands ready, and the crack-
 ling fagots burn,

While the hooting mob of yesterday in silent awe
 return

To glean up the scattered ashes into History's golden
 urn.

He had no patience with compromise.

He wrote in 1850
 of Horace Mann :



HORACE MANN, 1796-1859

I cannot help think-
 ing that Mr. Mann
 will be re-elected, and
 I hope he will, for I
 think he has had a
 sufficiently severe ex-
 perience of the folly
 of trying to serve
 party and duty at the
 same time. Like the

tapster in Henry IV. he has had only time to cry

"Anon, sir," to both parties at once, without satisfying either¹.

XXVI

Lowell's first payment for his poems came to him at the age of twenty-two, when he was invited to write for a new annual at \$5 per page. It was at this time that he wrote of the literary man as the hungriest, neediest, empty-pursiest, and without-a-centiest fellow on earth^{1 4}. Later he writes :

I think I may safely reckon on earning \$400 by my pen the next year, which will support me. Between this and June, 1843, I think I shall have freed myself of debt and become an independent man. I am to have \$15 a poem for the *Miscellany*, \$10 from *Graham*, and I have made an arrangement with the editor of the *Democratic Review* by which I shall probably get \$10 or \$15 more¹.

Feb. 16, 1845, he writes :

Graham will no doubt give me \$30, as he has done, for a poem. My new book, "Conversations on the Old Poets", will pay me \$100 for the first edition if it sells well. My volume of poetry may be called \$50 a year more. Another source of revenue has opened to me since I have come hither. The anti-slavery friends pay me \$5 for a leader for their paper, which comes out once a fortnight, making \$10 a month while I am here. You see I am not in want¹.

And on March 21 :

You will be glad to hear that the first edition of my "Conversations" (1,000) is gone already. I begin to feel rich. Owen owes me nearly \$300 at this moment. I hope my wealth will not make me proud¹.

On Dec. 20, 1848, he says of the "Biglow Papers" :

The first edition (1,500) were all gone in a week, so that the book was actually out of print before a second edition could be struck off from the plates. If the relative positions of author and publisher were established on a proper footing I ought to have cleared at least \$400 by these two editions. As it is I shall make \$250, from which something like \$200 will be deducted to pay for my stereotyped plates. This however, will also cover the printing of "Sir Launfal", which was published Monday¹.

XXVII

Besides his salary as professor at Harvard he had \$3,000 a year from 1857 to 1861 as editor of the *Atlantic*, and from 1863 to 1872 was well paid as associate editor of the *North American Review*. On Dec. 21, 1865, he writes :

Is \$50 any object with me ? I should think so.

If greenbacks and their figures grew upon trees I should be a lusty climber. Neither are odes to be found on every bush. As for pay I am lucky, though it puzzles me. The public with a shocking want of discrimination buy everybody's books but mine, and yet my verses are worth as much to a magazine as any other author's. However, that's their affair and not mine. For some years I have had twice fifty for whatever I write, and three or four times fifty for a long poem¹.

He writes Jan. 10, 1887, of his new book:

I get twenty-five cents copyright on copies sold during the first eight months of its publication, and then it goes into my general copyright, for which I am paid £400 a year. Not much after fifty years of authorship, but enough to keep me from the almshouse.

On Sept. 23, 1889, he chronicles that when he got back to London he found a letter from the New York *Ledger* inclosing a draft for two hundred pounds for whatever he should choose to send. So he sent them some verses that he had just written, pacifying his scruples with the thought that after all it was only his name they were paying for, and they knew best what it was worth to them¹.

XXVIII

The most important of the reviews and studies in the *Atlantic* and *North American* are contained in "My Study Windows" (1870), and in the first and second series of "Among My Books" (1870-76), which, with the "Fireside Travels", and "Conversations", make up his five volumes of prose. Of his criticism Stedman says :



His scrutiny is sure, and his tests are apt and instant. He is a detective to be dreaded by pretenders. * * Probably the most brilliant of his lighter essays is that On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners. The sentences gleam with wit, as from the play of polished swords.

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN, 1883— All forms of satire, irony, raillery, and sarcasm, are seen in it, but always in a quiet, bantering strain, and never with angry purpose. The delicate ridicule of the patronizing critics of our literature, institutions, and manners, is delicious. The airy grace of this sustained pleasantry is without parallel¹¹.

XXIX

Howells, who succeeded him as editor of the *Atlantic*, wrote of him in that magazine :



WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS, 1837—

He instinctively strives not only to give his sense a perfect form of speech, but to make it a tangible, detachable, portable image : the critic in him turns artist or poet, upon the first occasion.

* * * Dante is as tangible a presence in Mr. Lowell's book as if a commentator had never lived, and that august figure, which so many have labored to obscure, stands out in the relief and noble proportion of which any sincere and faithful reader of his poem may have glimpses if he will keep his mind clear of the rubbish of centuries of supposition and attribution. * * * Imagine criticism with the appreciative humor of Lamb's, the keen, poetic sympathy of Hunt's, the artistic insight of Hazlitt's, and you have something like Mr. Lowell's, but nothing quite like it till you have added his own erudition.

XXX

In 1855 he began lecturing. He liked it no better than Bayard Taylor, writing :

I begin my annual dissatisfaction of lecturing next Wednesday. I cannot get used to it ; all my nightmares are of lecturing¹.

And again :

I hate this business of lecturing. To be received at a bad inn by a song committee in a room with a stove that smokes but not exhilarates, to have three cold fish scales laid in your hand to shake, to be carried to a cold lecture room, to read a cold lecture to a cold audience, to be carried back to your smoke-side, and the three fish scales again—well it is not delightful exactly. On the whole I was so desperate that after a week of it I wrote out hither to be let off—but they would not, and so here I am. I shall go home with \$600 in my pocket, and one of those insects so common in Italy and Egypt in my ear. Sometimes, though, one has very pleasant times, and one gets *tremendous* puffs in the local papers¹.

XXXI

He was always a handsome man. Charles



JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, 1819-1891

Akers, an artist, who spent some time in Mr. Lowell's household, modelling for bronze relief portraits of several of the Harvard professors, said of him:

His fair complexion and long, curling, brown hair, parted in the middle, gave an impression of youth, which the rather heavy red moustache and beard could scarcely abate. Yet sometimes when intent in thought, youth vanished, and he had the look of the bust of Homer;—a difficult subject, I soon found, for an immature artist. He had as many moods as a town full of men. Under these moods where was the real Lowell? He was quite ready to reveal himself,—but there were so many of him! * * *

He was quite fastidious in his person and dress, always clothed in the simplest and best manner. With the conceit of provincial youth, I chose to disregard something of the prevailing fashion in dress and substitute some of my own notions. This kind of individuality he ridiculed, and said it was modest and proper to dress just as other people did. His taste in these matters was unexceptionable⁹.

A servant in Mr. Underwood's house who had admitted Lowell one evening, said to her mistress in naïve admiration, "I declare, ma'am, Mr. Lowell has the *coaxinest* eyes I ever see wid a man²."

XXXII

He had a shy but warmly affectionate nature, of which he made more demonstration than is common among Americans.

He writes to a friend :

My sorrows are not literary ones, but those of dally life. I pass through the world and meet scarcely a response to the affectionateness of my nature. I believe Maria [his wife] alone knows how loving I am to them. Brought up in a reserved and conventional family I cannot in society appear what I really am. I go out sometimes with my heart so full of yearning for my fellows, that the indifferent look with which even entire strangers pass me brings tears into my eyes. And then to be looked upon by those who do know me (externally) as "Lowell the poet"—it makes me sick. Why not as Lowell the man",—the boy rather, as "Jimmy Lowell", as I was at school¹?

Underwood says :

Complaints were made during his last years of Lowell's forbidding manners, and there were intima-

tions that he was less American at heart than British ; but nothing is more certain than the persistence of his patriotic feeling and his courage to express it under all circumstances.

A man of seventy who has passed through vicissitudes is seldom effusive, and Lowell certainly was no exception to the rule. People who expected that Hosea Biglow would be found sitting on a gate in Hyde Park, whittling and telling stories, were hardly prepared to see a rather stately man in faultless dress, whose steady eyes repelled familiarity, and sometimes rebuked pretension².

XXXIII

In conversation with his friends he was irresistible. Underwood says :

It was impossible for him to repress the bright fancies and droll conceits suggested by reading and conversation. Wit was as natural to him as breathing, and when the mood was on he could not help seeing and signalling puns. But epigrams and puns were the accompaniments, and not the end and aim of his conversation ; his perceptions were keen and just ; his reading had been well-nigh universal ; and, with his instant power of comparison, his judgments were like intuitions. But his discourse often took on an airy and tantalizing form, and wreathed itself in irony, or flowered in simile, or exploded in artifices, until it ended in some merry absurdity. Such play of argument, fancy, humor, word-twisting, and sparkling nonsense was seldom witnessed, except in the talk of the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table².

Max Muller says :

He was a professor, and at the same time a politician and a man of the world. * * * In society he was at home in England as much as in America, in Spain as well as in Holland. * * * His conversation was inexhaustible, his information astonishing¹⁵.

And Leslie Stevens :

I need not speak of his singular success in social functions of all kinds, and especially in after-dinner oratory. If he had been studying all his life to hit off the taste of an English audience he could not have done it better¹.

XXXIV

He could not restrain his playfulness. Mr. Aker, the sculptor, tells how one evening while Mr. Lowell was a Harvard professor as they were passing through an unfrequented lane, Mr. Lowell jumped up on the wall and began to crow lustily in furtherance of some ridiculous narrative, when unluckily a group of students came around the corner, seeing whom he instantly stiffened into the solemn professor of belles letters, returning the salute of the astonished youth with immense gravity. His fooling was irresistible. At table he was as good as a company of play-

ers, and was wont to declaim and narrate, sometimes in broadest Yankee dialect, till laughter became a fatigue⁹.

This pursuit of a sudden fancy appears in all his writing, Stedman says :

In a single page he compares Chaucer's style to a river and a precious vintage, and contrasts it with the froth of champagne and the folly of Milo.

And again :

In trying both to express his conviction and to find a method of his own he betrayed an irregular ear, and a voice rare in quality but not wholly to be relied upon. He had a way, moreover, of "dropping" like his own bobolink, of letting down his fine passages with odd conceits, mixed metaphors, and licenses, which as a critic he would not overlook in another. To all this add a knack of coining uncouth words for special tints of meaning, when there are good enough counters in the language for any poet's need.¹¹.

XXXV

He was sensitive to criticism, and writes testily :

I may be a bad poet, but I am a good versifier. I write with far more ease in verse than in prose. I have studied the subject, and I understand it from beginning to end. There is not a rough verse in my book that isn't intentional, and if my critic's ears

were as good as they are long they'd perceive it. I don't believe the man ever lived who put more conscience into his verses than I do¹.

His theory was, like Browning's, that verse was better with the sharp impression of the coin with which it came from the mint of the imagination.



ROBERT BROWNING, 1812-1890

Stedman says:

It is a fellow-feeling which leads him to say of Dryden, that "one of the charms of his best writing is

that everything seems struck off at heat, as by a superior man in the best mood of his talk." This transfer of his own nature is delightful. He *will* be free, and his censors should rate his freedom at its worth, and not hold him too rigidly to conventionalities which he understands, yet chooses to forego¹¹.

XXXVI

It need hardly be said that his letters are charming. It never occurred to him to keep back his best from his friends because it could be sold for printing at so much a page.

Thus he writes from Baltimore in 1877:

We are overwhelmed with kindness here. I feel very much as an elderly oyster might who was suddenly whiffed away into a polka with an electric eel.

Speaking of the fact that a certain layer of society had taken up Buffalo Bill in London, he says :

I think the true key to this eagerness for lions—even of the poodle sort—is the dullness of the average English mind. I never come back here without being struck with it. Henry James said it always stupefied him at first when he came back from the Continent. What it craves beyond everything is a sensation ; anything that will serve as a Worcestershire sauce to its sluggish palate.

He writes to R. W. Gilder, Oct. 9, 1890 :

I don't know DeQuincy well enough to write anything about him. I have not read a line of his these thirty years. I never write about any body without reading him through so as to get a total impression, and I have not time enough to do that in his case now. The only feeling I find in my



THOMAS DE QUINCY, 1785-1859

memory concerning him is that he was a kind of inspired *cad*, and an amplification of that with critical rose-water wouldn't answer your purpose.

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William Dean Howells

MARCH 1

WM. DEAN HOWELLS

I

The facts of Mr. Howells's life are few and simple. He was



born in Martinsville, O., March 1, 1837. His father soon after became publisher of a newspaper in Hamilton, Ohio, and like Read, Taylor, and

Whitman, he was in early life a printer, working in his father's office until he was 22 years old. At an early age he began to write for his father's jour-

nal, and in 1858 was for a time news-editor on the *Ohio State Journal*. In Dec., 1859, he joined John J. Piatt, a fellow printer, in publishing "Poems of Two Friends". In 1860, he wrote the life of Abraham Lincoln, and the next year was appointed by him United States consul in Venice, the service and the reward being much the same as that for which Hawthorne was made consul at Liverpool. He remained there until 1865, after which he returned to New York, and after some work on the *Nation* he became in 1866 assistant editor on the *Atlantic Monthly*. He became editor in 1871, and remained so for ten years. He then spent a year in Europe, and after various literary work upon his return, in 1885 he accepted a position on *Harper's Monthly* with the provision that all his books should thereafter be published by Harper & Bros. It was said at the time that the consideration of this was a yearly salary of \$10,000.

II

It seems almost forgotten now that his



JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, 1819-1891

first literary recognition was as a poet. It was his poems that called Mr. Lowell's attention to him, and it was Mr. Lowell's friendship which did so much to put him upon the road to reputation. In-

deed, Lowell lavished upon him that warm affection to which so few men give expression. He had written to him so far back as 1860 :

My dear young friend:—Here is a note to Mr. Hawthorne which you can use if you have occasion.

Don't print too much and too soon ; don't get married in a hurry ; read what will make you *think*, not *dream*. Hold yourself dear, and more power to your elbow. God bless you¹⁹.

In 1869, Lowell wrote to Howells :

You know very well that I would rather have you fond of me than write the best essay that ever Montaigne conceived as he paced to and fro in that bleak room of his¹⁹.

The note to Hawthorne read :

His name is Howells and he is a fine young fellow, and has written several poems in the *Atlantic*, which of course you have never read, because you don't do such things yourself and are old enough to know better¹⁹.

III

Though two collections of his poems by themselves have since been published, they are not especially musical and need not detain us long. Here is one of the best of them :

BEFORE THE GATE

They gave the whole long day to idle laughter,
To fitful song and jest,
To moods of soberness as idle, after,
And silences, as idle too as the rest.
But when at last upon their way returning,
Taciturn, late, and loath,
Through the broad meadow in the sunset burning,
They reached the gate, one fine spell hindered
them both.
Her heart was troubled with a subtle anguish
Such as but women know
That wait, and lest love speak or speak not languish,
And what they would, would rather they would
not so ;
Till he said,—man-like nothing comprehending
Of all the wondrous gulle
That women won win themselves with, and bending
Eyes of relentless asking on her the while,—

"Ah, if beyond this gate the path united
Our steps as far as death,
And I might open it!—" His voice affrighted
At its own daring, faltered under his breath.
Then she—whom both his faith and fear enchanted
Far beyond words to tell,
Feeling her woman's finest wit had wanted
The art he had that knew to blunder so well—
Shyly drew near, a little step, and mocking,
"Shall we not be too late
For tea?" she said. "I'm quite worn out with
walking :
Yes, thanks, your arm. And will you—open the
gate?"

IV

Through Lowell he was at once received into the inner literary circles of Cambridge. Mr. Akers speaks of him as one of the usual guests when Longfellow was translating Dante, and describes him as a slim, dark, handsome youth, recently returned from Venice²¹. His editorial work gave his friends much satisfaction. Lowell wrote to Fields :

That boy will know how to write if he keeps on, then we old fellows will have to look about us. His notice (I suppose it was his) of Longfellow's book was a masterpiece of delicate handling. How fair

it was, and yet what a kindly discretion in turning all good points to the light. Give my love to him and tell him I miss him much. Also in noticing my book to forget his friendship and deal honestly with me like a man¹⁹.

V

Presently he was invited, as Longfellow and Lowell had been, to become a college professor; but he declined, partly perhaps because Lowell wrote to him:

If you are able now without overworking mind or body to keep the wolf from the door and to lay by something for a rainy day—and I mean of course without your being driven to work with your left hand because the better one is tired out—I should refuse the offer, or should hesitate to accept it. If you are a systematic worker, independent of moods and sure of your genius whenever you want it, there might be no risk in accepting. You would have the advantage of a fixed income to fall back on. Is this a greater advantage than the want of inner feeling and the stir to industry? Was not the occasion of Shakespeare's plays (I don't say the motive of 'em) that he *had* to write? Are there any of us likely to be better inspired than he? Does not inspiration, in some limited sense at least, come with the exercise thereof, as the appetite with eating? Is not your hand better for keeping it in, as they say? A professorship takes a great deal of time, and if you

teach in any more direct way than by lectures uses up an immense stock of nerves. Your inevitable temptation (which cuts off your duty) will be to make yourself *learned*—which you happen to least need to be as an author (if you only have me at your elbow to correct your English now and then!) If you can make your professorship a thing apart—but can you, and be honest? I believe the present generation doesn't think I was made for a poet, but I think I could have gone nearer to Helicon if I had not estranged the muse by donning the professor's gown.

I am naturally indolent, and being worked pretty hard in the college was willing to be content with the amount of work that was squeezed out of me by my position, and let what otherwise my nature might have forced me into go. As I said before, if you can reckon on your own temperament accept, if you have a doubt, *don't*. I think you will divine what I am driving at¹⁹.

VI

During his consulate he had gathered material for three books of Italian description and travel, "Venetian Life" (1866), "Italian Journeys" (1867), and "Tuscan Cities", and he pictured his life in Cambridge in "Suburban Sketches" (1871). They pleased especially for their dainty workmanship. Whipple wrote in 1876:

The writings of William D. Howells are masterpieces of literary workmanship, resembling the products of those cunning artificers who add one or two thousand per cent to the value of their raw material by their incomparable way of working it up. What they are as artisans he is as artist²².

VII

All these books contained little sketches of character that showed him a keener observer of people than of places; and "Their Wedding Journey" (1872), though on the surface a sketch of a trip from Boston to New York, up the Hudson, across New York from Albany to Buffalo, and down the St. Lawrence to Quebec, was much more interesting for the little story of the honeymoon experiences of a married couple than as a guide-book. Its success was so much above that of his previous books that he followed it by novels pure and simple, "A Chance Acquaintance" (1873), "The Lady of the Aroostook" (1875), "The Undiscovered Country" (1880), and so on, till the list of titles has become a long one.

VIII

This series of novels has more points of resemblance to



Thackeray's than to any others. As Thackeray's Penden-
ennis reappears whenever the au-
thor wants to speak
in his own person,
so Basil March of

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY,
1811-1863

"The Wedding
Journey" reap-

pears in "The Shadow of a Dream" and
"A Hazard of New Fortunes". Indeed the
same characters often come up again. Mr.
Ferris of "A Foregone Conclusion" appears
in "A Fearful Responsibility", for instance;
Dr. Wingate and Clara Kingsbury of "A
Modern Instance" in "An Imperative Duty";
and Bartley Hubbard and Ricker of "A
Modern Instance" and the Northwicks of
"Annie Kilburn" appear in "The Quality
of Mercy".

But there is a marked contrast between
Howells's novels and Thackeray's: Howells.

has no where depicted a maliciously bad man or woman. Weak men there are, and silly women, but not in all his books is there a scoundrel like the Marquis of Steyne. Howells is an optimist, and chooses to see the sunny side of character.

IX

Thus, although of the realist school, believing that he must picture the men and women about him as they are, and leaving them to tell their own stories, his touch is always a loving one. The key to his philosophy of life may be found in a passage in "Their Wedding Journey", where after describing the vulgar antics of an ill-bred trio, he says: "Ah! poor Real Life, which I love, can I make others share the delight I find in thy foolish and insipid face?"

His mistake is in thinking that foolish and insipid people are any more real than their superiors; or, as a critic has said, that common people must necessarily be plebeian.

X

This suggests another resemblance to Thackeray. All Howells's novels have such

a consciousness of Society with a capital S that they might be called the Shabby-Genteel series. His people are mostly hanging to the edges of Society by their finger-nails, and trembling lest they should lose their hold by yielding to a natural impulse. "The Rise of Silas Lapham" is a painful story of a man whose money gained him admission where his manners made him out of place. In "A Hazard of New Fortunes" the blunder is illustrated of trying to lift into *our* circle a family not brought up to it.

XI

This society that people are so anxious to get into is illustrated in Mrs. Makely's definition of a lady :

"In the first place, a lady must be above the sordid anxieties in every way. She need not be very rich, but she must have enough, so that she need not be harrassed about making both ends meet, when she ought to be devoting herself to her social duties. The time is past with us when a lady could look after the dinner, and perhaps cook part of it herself, and then rush in to receive her guests, and do the amenities. She must have a certain kind of house, so that her entourage won't seem cramped and mean, and she must have nice frocks, of course, and plenty of them. She needn't be of the smart

set; that isn't at all necessary; but she can't afford to be out of the fashion. Of course she must have a certain training. She must have cultivated tastes; she must know about art, and literature, and music, and all those kind (*sic*) of things, and though it isn't necessary to go in for anything particular, it won't hurt her to have a fad or two. The nicest kind of fad is charity; and people go in for that a great deal. I think sometimes they use it to work up with, and there are some who use religion in the same way. I think it's horrid; but it's perfectly safe; you can't accuse them of doing it. I'm happy to say, though, that mere church association doesn't count socially so much as it used to. Charity is a great deal more insidious. But you see how hard it is to define a lady. So much has to be left to the nerves, in all these things! And then it's changing all the time; Europe's coming in, and the old American ideals are passing away. Things that people did ten years ago would be impossible now, or at least ridiculous. You wouldn't be considered vulgar, quite, but you would certainly be considered a back number, and that's almost as bad. Really," said Mrs. Makely, "I don't believe I can tell you what a lady is."

XII

He is quite capable of satirizing the aristocracy. Thus he says of Mr. Pasmer:

He had no vices, unless absolute idleness ensuing uninterruptedly upon a remotely demonstrated un-

fitness for business can be called a vice. Like other people who have always been idle, he did not consider his idleness a vice. He rather plumed himself upon it, for the man who has done nothing all his life naturally looks down upon people who have done or are doing something. In Europe he had not all the advantage of this superiority which such a man has here; he was often thrown with other idle people who had been useless for so many generations that they had almost ceased to have any consciousness of it. In their presence Pasmer felt that his uselessness had not that passive elegance which only ancestral uselessness can give; that it was positive, and to that degree vulgar⁵.

XIII

At the same time, he thoroughly believes in the real thing.

"The natural goodness doesn't count. The natural man is a wild beast, and his natural goodness is the amiability of a beast basking in the sun when his stomach is full. The Hubbards were full of natural goodness, I dare say, when they didn't happen to cross each other's wishes. No, it's the implanted goodness that saves,—the seed of righteousness treasured from generation to generation, and carefully watched and tended by disciplined fathers and mothers in the hearts where they have dropped it. The flower of this implanted goodness is what we call civilization, the condition of general uprightness that Halleck declared he owed no allegiance to¹²."

"I shouldn't complain of not being asked to people's houses, and the workingmen don't; you can't do that; but I should feel it an incalculable loss. We may laugh at the emptiness of society, or pretend to be sick of it, but there is no doubt that society is the flower of civilization, and to be shut out from it is to be denied the best privilege of a civilized man. There are society women—we have all met them—whose graciousness and refinement of presence are something of incomparable value; it is more than a liberal education to have been admitted to it⁹."

XIV

Here are quotations that show how constantly he keeps social standing in mind :

His self-possession, his entire absence of anxiety, or any expectation of rebuff or snub, might be the ease of unimpeachable social acceptance, or it might be merely adventurous effrontery⁵.

She bowed very civilly to me, but with a touch of severity such as country people find necessary for the assertion of their self-respect with strangers⁹.

She had done what could be done with folding carpet chairs to give the little room a specious air of luxury¹².

The father frowning absently over his plate, with his head close to it, and making play into his mouth with the back of his knife (he had got so far toward the use of his fork as to dispise those who still ate from the edge of their knives)¹⁰.

"Why shouldn't one be a newspaper woman, if Harvard graduates are to be journalists?"

"Well, you know, only a certain kind are."

"What kind?"

"Well, not exactly what you'd call the gentlemanly sort."

"I thought Mr. Boardman was a great friend of yours?"

"He is. He is one of the best fellows in the world. But you must have seen that he wasn't a swell."

Yet Olive Halleck, one of his well-bred girls, is fond of saying of what does not please her. "It makes me sick¹²"; and Dr. Olney, whom Howells certainly considers a swell, tests the contents of a bottle of medicine he has ordered for a lady by "a touch of the inner tip of the cork on his tongue⁷".

XV

In contrast with his recognition of the artificial demands of society is his radical position as a social reformer. "Annie Kilburn" did her best as a philanthropist, and "A Traveller from Altruria" wore but a thin veil of fiction to cover an essay on political economy. The work of the laborer, he says, may be roughly defined as the necessity of

his life, the work of the business man as the means, and the work of the artist and scientist as the end°. In Altruria labor is so honored that it is always artistic. The government owns and operates the railways, telegraphs, mines, and all large industries, and the hateful word business has disappeared with the thing itself. In "The World of Chance" there is much of this speculation.

"For instance, take this whole architectural nightmare that we call a city. I hold that the average tasteless man has no right to realize his ideas of a house in the presence of a great multitude of his fellowing-beings. It is an indecent exposure of his mind, and should not be permitted. All these structural forms about us, which with scarcely an exception are ugly and senseless, I regard as so many immoralities, as deliriums, as imbecilities, which a civilized state would not permit, and I say so in my book. The city should build the city, and provide every denizen with a fit and beautiful habitation to work in and rest in°."

XVI

He even defended the Chicago rioters, calling down on himself a great deal of harsh criticism. But Lowell wrote him in 1890:

"And now let me say something I have been wishing to say this great while. I have seen some of the

unworthy flings at you in the papers of late. I know that you will not feel them more than an honest man should, but I am indignant about them. You are one of the chief honors of our literature, and your praises are dear to us all. You know I don't share some of your opinions, or sympathize with some of your judgments, but I am not such an ass as not to like a man better for saying that *he* thinks and not what *I* think. Though I thought those Chicago ruffians well hanged, I especially honored your courage in saying what you did about them. You can't make me fonder of you, but I am sure you will make me prouder of you¹⁹.

XVII

In "An Imperative Duty" he grapples with the problem of inter-marriage with the negro, and makes it a simple matter for his hero to marry a girl whose grandmother was an unmarried slave. Here is a paragraph from "Italian Journeys":

Regarding the face of Pompey's statue in the Spada Palace, I was more struck than ever with a resemblance to American politicians which I had noticed in all the Roman statues. It is a type of face not now to be found in Rome, but frequent enough here, and rather in the South than in the North. Pompey was like the pictures of so many Southern Congressmen that I wondered whether race had not less to do with producing types than had similarity

of circumstances ; whether a republicanism based upon slavery could not so far assimilate character as to produce a common aspect in people widely separated by time and creeds, but having the same unquestioned habits of command, and the same boundless and unscrupulous ambition*.

And here is a touching hit from "An Imperative Duty" :

The girl turned abruptly on her. "Can He change your skin ? Can He make black white ?"

The old woman seemed daunted ; she faltered. "I don't know as he ever tried, lady ; the Bible don't tell." She added, more hopefully, "But I reckon He could do it if He wanted to."

"Then why doesn't He do it ?" demanded the girl. "What does He leave you black for, when He could make you white ?"

"I reckon He don't think it's worth while, if He can make me *willing to be black* so easy. Somebody's got to be black, and it might as well be me," said the old woman, with a meek sigh'.

XVIII

His optimism extends to his religion, "He thought", he says in "A Hazard of New Fortunes", "as the priest went on with the solemn liturgy, how all the world must come together in that peace which, struggle and strive as we may, shall claim us at last.

* * * He thought how we never can atone for the wrong we do ; the heart we have grieved and wounded cannot kindle with pity for us when once it is stilled. And yet we can put our evil from us with penitence ; and somehow, somewhere, the order of loving-kindness, which our passion or our wilfulness has disturbed, will be restored¹⁰."

And again :

"But I should think," he went on musingly, "that when God sees what we poor finite creatures can bear, hemmed round with this eternal darkness of death, He must respect us."

"Basil !" said his wife. But in her heart she drew nearer to him for the words she thought she ought to rebuke him for.

"Oh, I know," he said, "we school ourselves to despise human nature. But God did not make us despicable, and I say whatever end He meant us for, He must have some such thrill of joy in our adequacy to fate as a father feels when his son shows himself a man. When I think what we can be if we must, I can't believe the least of us shall finally perish¹⁰."

XIX

The conclusion of "The Undiscovered Country", which deals with spiritualism, shows his faith.

"It is very curious, very strange indeed, but the only thing that I have got by all this research is the one great thing which it never included,—which all research of the kind ignores."

Ford perceived that he wished him to ask what this was, and he said "What is that?"

"God," replied Boynton. * * *

"Who is it," Boynton asked suddenly, "that speaks of the undiscovered country?"

"Hamlet," replied Ford.

"It might have been Job,—it might have been Ecclesiastes, or David. 'The undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns.' It that it?"

"Yes! They commonly misquote it," added Ford, mechanically.

"I know; they leave out *bourn*. They say, the undiscovered country whence no traveller returns. But it's the same thing. Yes; and Hamlet says no traveller returns when he believes that he has just seen his father's spirit! The ghost that comes back to prove itself can't hold him to a belief in its presence after the heated moment of vision is past! We *must* doubt it; we are better with no proof. Yes, yes! The undiscovered country!—thank God it can be what those babblers say! The undiscovered country!—what a weight of doom is in the words—and hope!"

XX

But perhaps Howell's most pervasive belief is that he has fathomed the mystery of

woman. "I think I know women," Thackeray says, "because I know I don't know them." Howells is cock-sure that he does know them, and he is continually entering into minute analyses of their mental and moral processes. Some people accept his conclusions. A writer in *The Century* (i. 680) says :

What he feels for them is not the exultation of a man who has found them out, or the pity of a superior being for attractive inferiors, but the sympathy of a man who understands them, and what we are all hungry for is not so much that we may be loved as that we may be understood.

XXI

But are woman necessarily such creatures as Howells represents them ? In the first place his women are continually saying the opposite of what they mean, yet expecting to be understood. "Women like to be understood, even when they try not to be understood¹²." "I didn't mean it," cries Marcia, in "A Modern Instance," "I only *said* it." "Oh, I didn't want to see them ! I was afraid to see them, and I hoped they had come," answered Egeria⁴.

"I see more and more that father and mother can never be what they used to be to me,—that you're all the world to me. Yes, my life is broken off from theirs forever. Could anything break it off from yours? You'll always be patient with me, won't you? and remember that I'd always rather be good when I'm behaving the worst!⁸?"

With her little flutter of futile deceptions, her irreverence for every form of human worth and her trust in a providence which had seldom failed her, she smiled at the cult of Alice's friends, as she did at the girl's seriousness, which also she felt herself able to keep from going too far⁹.

XXII

Woman's logic is to him a constant delight in demonstration. "It's like a woman's reasoning," he says; "you can't tell what it's aimed at, or where it's going to fetch up; all that you can do is to keep out of the way if possible⁹." And again, "Nothing mystifies a man more than a woman's aberration from some point at which he supposes her fixed as a star¹⁰."

"I do not expect you to relent, and in fact I should consider it rather frivolous if you did. No. What I have always admired in your character, Lucy, is a firm, logical consistency; a clearness of mental vision that leaves no side of a subject un-

searched ; and an unwavering constancy of purpose. You may say that these traits are characteristic of *all* women; but they are pre eminently characteristic of you, Lucy."

Miss Galbraith looks askance at him, to make out whether he is in earnest or not¹⁸.

Having comfortably accomplished this feat, she treated Basil's consent as a matter of course, not because she did not regard him, but because as a woman she could not conceive of the steps to her conclusion as unknown to him, and always treated her own decisions as the product of their common reasoning³.

"No matter ! It was because you had never more than hardly tasted it that a very little overcame you in an instant. I see !" she repeated, contemplating him in her ecstasy, as the one habitually sober man in a Boston full of inebriates. "And now I shall never regret it ; I shall never care for it ; I shall never think about it again ! Or, yes ! I shall always remember it, because it [her husband's coming home drunk] shows—because it *proves* that you are always strictly temperate. It was worth happening for that. I am *glad* it happened¹⁹ !"

XXIII

Less to be forgiven is his assumption that all women nag the men about them.

Mrs. Halleck drove Cyrus on to the work of tying up the vines and trimming the shrubs, with the pitiless rigor of women when they get a man about some outdoor labor²⁰.

She was apt to recur to this in any moment of discouragement, and she urged him now to give up his newspaper work with that wearisome persistence with which women torment the men they love¹².

Marriage is, with all its disparities, a much more equal thing than appears, and the meek little wife, who has all the advantage of public sympathy, knows her power over her oppressor, and at some tender spot in his affections or his nerves can inflict an anguish that will avenge her for years of coarser aggression. Thrown in upon herself in so vital a matter as her religion, Mrs. Gaylord had involuntarily come to live largely for herself, though her talk was always of her husband. She gave up for him, as she believed, her soul's salvation, but she held him to account for the uttermost farthing of the price. She padded herself round at every point where she could have suffered through her sensibilities, and lived soft and snug in the shelter of his iron will and indomitable courage. It was not apathy that she had felt when their children died one after another, but an obscure and formless exultation that Mr. Gaylord would suffer enough for both¹³.

We do not like to hear this of the couple that charmed us in "Their Wedding Journey":

He supposed he was treating the matter humorously, but in this sort of banter between husband

and wife there is always much more than the joking. March has seen some pretty, feminine inconsistencies of trepidations, which once charmed him, hardening into traits of middle age which were very like those of less interesting older women. The sight moved him with a kind of pathos, but he felt the results hindering and vexatious¹⁰.

XXIV

The greatest charm of his writing is its pervasive kindly humor. Fulkerson's story of old Dryfoos in the Italian restaurant reminds one of Mark Twain, but his usual style is all his own.

The marble Venus of the fountain, he says, was surprised without her shower on⁴.

"You could have been as good a poet as that, Basil," said the ever-personal and concretely speaking Isabel, who could not look at a mountain without thinking what Basil might have done in that way, if he had tried⁵.

She waited for Ford to speak in response to her last remark ; but he was not one of those men who rush like air into any empty place ; he had the gift of reticence, and the lady who had planned the vacuum beheld his self-control with the admiration⁶.

Basil put out the light. "O, I'm sorry you did that, my dear fellow," said the Colonel ; "but never mind, it was an idle curiosity, no doubt. Its my belief that in the landlord's extremity of bed-linen,

I've been put to sleep between a pair of table-cloths ; and I thought I'd like to look. It seems to me that I make out a checkered pattern on top and a flowered or arabesque pattern underneath. I wish they had given me mates. It's pretty hard having to sleep between *odd* table-cloths. I shall complain to the landlord of this in the morning. I've never had to sleep between *odd* table-cloths at *any* hotel before^s."

XXV

His conversations, especially in his little parlor plays, like "The Mouse Trap", are full of sparkle.

"It's nothing but his ridiculous, romantic way of taking the world to heart," Olive interposed. "You may be sure he's troubled about something that doesn't concern him in the least. It's what comes of the life-long conscienciousness of his parents. If Ben doesn't turn out a philanthropist of the deepest dye yet, you'll have me to thank for it. I see more and more every day that I was providentially born wicked, so as to keep this besottedly righteous family's head above water^{1 s}"

XXVI

He is fond of indicating dialect.

"Well, men *are* splendid," sighed the girl. "Ah will *say* it."

"Oh, they're not so much better than women," said Fulkerson, with a nervous jocosity. "I guess

March would have backed down if it hadn't been for his wife. She was as hot as pepper about it, and you could see that she would have sacrificed all her husband's relations sooner than let him back down an inch from the stand he had taken. It's pretty easy for a man to stick to a principle if he has a woman to stand by him. But when you come to play it alone—"

"Mr. Fulkerson," said the girl solemnly, "*Ah* will stand bah you in this, if all the wold tones against you." The tears came into her eyes, and she put out her hand to him.

"You *will?*" he shouted, in a rapture. "In every way—and always—as long as you live? Do you mean it?" He had caught her hand to his breast and was grappling it tight there, and drawing her to him.

The changing emotions chased each other through her heart and over her face; dismay, shame, pride, tenderness. "You don't *believe*," she said hoarsely, "that I mean *that?*"

"No, but I hope you *do* mean it; for if you don't, nothing else means anything."

There was no space, there was only a point of wavering. "*Ah do* mean it."

When they lifted their eyes from each other again it was half-past ten. "No you must go," she said¹⁰.

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John Lothrop Motley



JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY

APRIL 13

JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY

I

The key to Motley's life is given in a letter he received from President Felton of Harvard college, who wrote: "I consider him the happiest of mankind who, having a taste for letters and the genius requisite to accomplish great work, *is so favored by his outward fortunes* that he can follow his taste and give free scope to his genius. This happiness you have, and you have shown yourself to be worthy of it by the great achievement you have accomplished with the freshness of growing and vigorous early manhood still upon your spirit²."

Motley owed a great deal to wealth, personal grace, culture, and the friendship of great men, and he made noble use of the opportunities these gave him.

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II

He was born in Dorchester, April 15, 1814, the son of a well-to-do manufacturer. His most intimate playmates were Thomas Gould Appleton and Wendell Phillips. His father and mother were called the handsomest couple in Boston, and the boy was throughout life distinguished for his beauty. When ten years old he was sent to Round Hill school at Northampton, of which Mr. Bancroft and Mr. Cogswell were principals. He remained here two years and a half, and his letters give the best description of the school from the boy's point of view that we have found. Here he was somewhat spoiled. He was not only handsome, but distinguished as a declaimer, with a remarkable facility for acquiring languages; and he had a personal charm which might have made him a universal favorite had he not been wilful, impetuous, supercilious, and fastidious. Wendell Phillips says he wondered at the diligence and painstaking and the drudgery afterward shown in his historical works, for in early life he had no industry, not

needing it. All he cared for in a book he caught quickly,—the spirit of it, and all his mind needed or would use. This quickness of apprehension was marvellous¹.

III

At thirteen he entered Harvard, the youngest student in college, two years after Oliver Wendell Holmes, his friend through life and his biographer, and in the same class with Wendell Phillips and Tom Appleton. He was rusticated for negligence, and even after that made no effort for college rank. Here he was considered by most of his fellows haughty in manner and cynical in mood, and he was not a favorite, though he was recognized as brilliant, and had warm friends.

IV

Soon after graduation he sailed for Germany, being 50 days on the water. He went to Göttingen, where he became so well acquainted with Bismarck that they went to Berlin together and became fellow lodgers. After his death Bismarck wrote of him to Dr. Holmes:

“ There we lived in the closest intimacy, sharing meals and outdoor exercises. Motley by that time had arrived at talking German fluently; he occupied himself not only in translating Goethe’s ‘Faust’, but tried his hand even in composing German verses. Enthusiastic admirer of Shakspeare, Byron, Goethe, he used to spice his conversation abundantly with quotations from these his favorite authors. A pertinacious arguer, so much so that sometimes he watched my awakening in order to continue a discussion on some topic of science, poetry, or practical life, cut short by the chime of the small hours, he never lost his mild and amiable temper.” * * * “The most striking feature of his handsome and delicate appearance was uncommonly large and beautiful eyes. He never entered a drawing-room without exciting the curiosity and sympathy of the ladies.”

V

He had made law his chosen profession, but he never engaged in the practice of it. Like Lowell, he only flirted with it while he paid serious attention to literature.

Wendell Phillips says: "He could not have been 11 years old when he began writing a novel. It opened, I remember, not with one solitary horseman, but with two, riding up to an inn in the valley of the Housatonic. Neither of us had ever seen the Housatonic, but it sounded grand and romantic. Two chapters were finished¹."

In 1839 he published a novel called "Morton's Hope". It failed, but as Dr. Holmes says:

"It is not to be read as a novel: it is to be studied as an autobiography, a prophecy, a record of aspirations, disguised under a series of incidents which are flung together with no more regard for the unities than a pack of shuffled playing-cards¹."

A second novel (1849), "Merrymount", was little more successful.

VI

His first historical work was a fifty-page article in the *North American Review* for October, 1845, nominally a book review, but really a narrative of Peter the Great. Evidently he had been studying with careful

accuracy and broad purpose. It was a sketch, but it betrayed the hand of a master¹.

Two years later appeared an article in the same magazine on Balzac, and another on New England.

In 1846 he began collecting materials for a history of Holland. He had written in 1842 on his return trip from St. Petersburg:

“The old history of Belgium is so picturesque, the towns where its most striking and stirring tragedies were enacted—Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges—are so picturesque with the cobweb tracery of their architecture, the colossal filigree of their town halls, the transparent and fantastic lacework of their cathedrals, in which the stone looks as if it had been spun by spiders, the elaborate quaintness of their old burgher palaces, with their gables fashioned like Spanish galley-sterns, or Jacob’s ladders, or any other massive whimsy, and all in such admirable keeping with the turbulent history of the Hanseatic republics gradually changing into Spanish provinces, and with the showy actors, whose portraits painted by

so many immortal painters, from John of Bruges to Vandyke, still with their point lace ruffs and gold chains and velvet robes, harmonize so well with the scenery, that a loitering tour made at one's ease through their towns might be a very pleasant summer's amusement²."

VII

It is a pleasant illustration of the comity between men of letters that when he learned that Prescott was contemplating a history of Philip the Second, covering very much the same ground he had in view, he at once went to him. But Prescott, instead of resenting the interference, encouraged Motley to go on, and begged him to make use of all the books in his library that would help him, assuring him that no two books ever injured each other. "Had the result of the interview been different," wrote Motley afterwards, "had he distinctly stated or even vaguely hinted that it would be as well if I should select some other topic, or had he only sprinkled me with the cold water of conventional and commonplace encour-

agement, I should have gone from him with a chill upon my mind, and, no doubt, have laid down the pen at once; for, as I have already said, it was not because I felt like writing a history, but that I felt an inevitable impulse to write *one particular history*¹."

VIII

Deciding that he must have recourse to documents only to be found in Europe, he sailed with his family in 1851, and worked for several years in the archives of Berlin, Dresden, The Hague, and Brussels. He writes from Brussels in 1853: "We have not a single acquaintance in the place, and we glory in the fact. There is something rather sublime in thus floating on a single straw, in the wide sea of a populous, busy, fuming, fussy, little world like this. At any rate it is consonant with both our tastes."

And again he writes: "For two or three years, during which I have written almost nothing, I have been collecting a large quantity of material in the shape of unpublished letters and other documents of eminent historical characters, and I have been

reading them so much and so constantly that the individuals seem to hold themselves with a ghastly kind of light, and seem to haunt me²."

The most solitary-winter he ever spent in his life was that of 1857-8 at Brussels. He writes: "I was all day in the archives and nearly all night in my chamber. I hardly ever spoke except to exchange a few brief signals with my fellow-worms, who were feeding like my self on the carcass of the buried centuries; and the consequences of such a solitary and ghoul-like existence was to subdue my nature to the condition of the carrion I had been consuming."

And again: "I work till twelve or one o'clock, burning a good deal of midnight spermaceti, which at the rate charged for it comes according to my calculation to about one whale a month."

IX

To examine all these original documents was a matter not only of immense labor (he speaks of Spanish despatches that run fifty pages without even a comma), but also of much difficulty of access. He writes:

“ A friend of mine once went into a soda-water shop in Boston on a very hot day, and was told by an elderly individual behind the counter that his son John, proprietor of the establishment, had gone to Portland, but upon his return he would undoubtedly be very happy to prepare him a glass. This is exactly my case. The Earl of Clarendon is absent with the queen at Balmoral. Panizzi, of the British museum, is in Turin, Dallas is in the Isle of Wight, and others are hiding themselves in other corners, or pretending to be absent even if actually here, because in September it is disreputable to be in London. No moral or religious person will acknowledge himself to be here. When these illustrious personages all get back, they will unite to prepare my glass of soda-water. At that time I shall be in Paris². ”

X

Besides his own labor, he employed copyists. He writes:

“ I have three secretaries, one resident at Her Majesty's State paper office, one established at the British Museum, and one in

the Kingdom of Holland, and when the salaries of all three are paid the balance for the home department will be somewhat diminished. My secretary here is quite satisfactory," he says. "He is intelligent and writes a good hand. The price paid is fourpence for what is called a folio, containing 72 words. This is exactly 9 words for one cent, and is the highest price paid for copying anywhere. I have just consoled myself by writing out a page in the *Atlantic* magazine in folios, and I find to copy that amount would be worth about 80 cents; therefore if I am forced to penny-a-lining I can get about 13 times as much for writing a page as for copying one²." This was after Lowell had offered him first five dollars a page and then \$250 an article to write for the *North American Review*.

XI

But he was no mere chronicler. Dr. Holmes well says: "An historian among archivists and annalists reminds one of Sir John Lubbock in the midst of his ant-hills. Undoubtedly he disturbs the ants in their

praise-worthy industry, much as his attentions may flatter them. Unquestionably the ants (if their means of expressing themselves were equal to their apparent intellectual ability) could teach him many things that he has overlooked and correct him in many mistakes. But the ants will labor ingloriously without an observer to chronicle their doings, and the archivists and annalists will pile up facts forever like so many articulates or mollusks or radiates, until the vertebrate historian comes with his generalizing ideas, his beliefs, his prejudices, his idiosyncrasies of all kinds, and brings the facts into a more or less imperfect, but still organic series of relations."

He thoroughly enjoyed his work. He writes : " It is a comfort, as I can't make speeches or write articles in the newspapers (if I wished) against Captain-General Haynau, or Emperor Nicholas, or President Bonaparte, to be able to pitch into the Duke of Alva and Philip the Second to my heart's content. It is quite satisfactory to express sentiments, which if I had the advantage of living 300 years ago, and had had the

audacity to express myself as freely, would have entitled me to be burned alive on an average twice a day, and to know that the only martyrdom I am likely to undergo is that of not finding a publisher for my treason, for fear that it won't pay; the only rack that of being roasted on the gridiron of some singeing, scorching, redhot review²."

XII

As a matter of fact he could not find a publisher for his first book, "The History of the Dutch Republic". Murray kept the manuscript for a fortnight, but decided against it, and Motley was obliged to issue the book at his own expense, his father furnishing the money. He did not hope for much sale. He wrote from Italy that to go to England and leave his family and return again would be very expensive, and hardly worth while to secure a copyright which he could not sell for \$500. It might be very well for Mr. Prescott to do so, as he could sell his books for one thousand pounds a volume.

On May 13, 1856, he writes:

“I have heard nothing from Chapman since the book was published, but I feel sure from the silence that very few copies have been sold. I shall be surprised if a hundred copies are sold at the end of the year². ”

He writes to his father:

“The greatest satisfaction which I have derived from the writing of the history is the pleasure and occupation which it has given you, and were it not such a very expensive matter to both our pockets I should like nothing better than to write another immediately; but I think it safer to pause on the road to ruin². ”

XIII

It proved an astonishing success, 17,000 copies being sold the first year in England alone. It was reprinted at Amsterdam and was translated into Dutch, German, and French. When in 1860 his second book, “The History of the United Netherlands”, was ready Murray asked to publish it, confessing his self-reproach at losing his chance to publish “Dutch Republic”. Motley

consented; and at Murray's tradesale dinner, given Nov. 15, 1860, the "United Netherlands" took the lead, 3,000 copies being called for. As he had only agreed to publish 2,000 he was agreeably disappointed, and increased the edition to 4,000¹.

His last work published was "The Life and Death of John of Barneveld, Advocate of Holland; with a view of the primary causes and movements of the Thirty Years' War."

Of this, which is a vindication of the statesman so much maligned, Holmes says it is impossible not to read much of his own external and internal personal history told under other names and with different accessories¹.

XIV

For Motley's public life had been a disappointment.

In 1841 he was appointed secretary of the Russian Mission, and reached St. Petersburg at the beginning of winter. He could not

take his family with him, the climate seemed rigorous, the income was not equal to his expenses, and he soon resigned. But he became much interested in politics. The election of Polk made him almost discouraged over our institutions, and he already looked forward to the revolt of the slave States, which occurred 15 years later.

XV

In 1849 he was a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and served as chairman of the committee on education. Boutwell, afterwards governor, and member of Lincoln's cabinet, but then a young man from Groton, rose and so demolished the report that he was unable to defend it, which cured him of any ambition for political promotion in Massachusetts. His proposition was to endow the colleges at the expense of the fund for the common schools, and, as Mr. Boutwell afterwards said, failure was inevitable. Neither Webster nor Choate could have carried the bill¹.

XVI

For ten years he immersed himself in his



historical work, but when the civil war grew imminent he became absorbed in the issues involved. While in England he exercised strong influence to prevent re-

WILLIAM EDWARD FORSTER, 1818-1886 cognition of the Confederacy, as is shown by a letter from W. E. Forster, one of the great allies of the North in this struggle².

An elaborate letter from Motley was published in the London *Times*, explaining clearly and comprehensively the nature of the Union, and the actual causes of the struggle. There was so much misunderstanding upon the subject that the letter was of the greatest service, and it was re-published in the United States, and universally read and approved².

XVII

On Aug. 12, 1861, he was made minister to Austria, where he remained for six years. He writes from Vienna: "I have written a volume or so since I have been here, but I always feel like a circus-rider, trying to bestride two horses at once. One of my steeds is called the 16th, the other the 19th century, and both go at a tremendous pace²."

And again: "Dear me! I wish I could get back to the 16th and 17th centuries! If once we had "Rebels licked, Jeff Davis hanged and all", I must shunt myself back to my old rail. But alas! the events of the 19th century are too engrossing²."

His published letters, with those to him from Oliver Wendell Holmes, form a graphic panorama of the civil war as seen by contemporaries. Motley was intensely loyal and he was far-sighted. From the beginning he urged that the north could be successful only through emancipation. He recognized the seriousness of the Trent affair. Of Lincoln he wrote to his daughter:

"I have the most profound respect for

him, which increases every day. His wisdom, courage, devotion to duty, and simplicity of character, seem to me to embody in a very striking way all that is most noble in the American character and American destiny²."

XVIII

He was equally acute in his judgment of foreign affairs. For Louis Napoleon at the height of his fame he had utter contempt. As early as 1855 he wrote of Bismarck that he was destined to be prime minister. In 1859 he wrote:

"If there were a young, vigorous, intellectual sovereign in Prussia at this moment, a man like Frederick the Great, or Peter the Great, he would see that the time had arrived for Prussia to secure at last the object of its ambition, the imperial crown of Germany²."

While his duties at Vienna were not especially difficult, in the one case in which he had to take vigorous measures, to prevent the departure of a thousand Austrian volunteers to aid Maximilian in Mexico, his pro-

test was effective and yet made with such tact as to arouse no resentment¹.

XIX

Yet in 1866 he was recalled, owing to an anonymous letter, in which he was accused of criticizing the official acts of President Johnson.

Holmes says: " Mr. Seward appears not to have made the slightest effort to protect Mr. Motley against his coarse and jealous chief at two critical moments, and though his own continuance in office may have been more important to the State than that of the Vicar of Bray was to the church, he ought to have risked something, as it seems to me, to shield such a patriot, such a gentleman, such a scholar, from ignoble treatment¹."

XX

Again in 1869, the Alabama Treaty negotiated by Reverdy Johnson, then minister to England, had been rejected by the senate. Mr. Johnson was recalled, and Motley, nominated without opposition and unanimously confirmed by the senate, was sent to Eng-

land in his place. Within a year he was once more insulted by a recall, the alleged cause being an interview with Lord Clarendon in which he was accused of departing from his instructions; and the real cause probably to punish his friend Senator Sumner for opposing Gen. Grant's project to purchase San Domingo. It was even suspected that Gen. Grant intended to make Mr. Sumner Motley's successor in order to get him out of the way. From this blow Motley never recovered. All his after life was embittered.

He writes in 1871: "Events at home fill me with disgust unfathomable. I am now amusing myself with the intrigues and the hatreds and personal and political jealousies and lyings and back-bitings of the seventeenth century in the archives here as a relief to the same sort of commodities in the nineteenth."

He continued his historical work, but rather as a matter of habit than from interest, and after his wife's death he simply awaited the end. In 1873 he had a hemorrhage, followed by something resembling

paralysis. He died May 29, 1887, and was buried in Kensal Green cemetery, London, Dean Stanley performing the services.

XXI

But if he failed politically, socially he received perhaps greater honors than have fallen to any other American. His intimate friendship with Bismarck has already been mentioned. He writes of meeting him at Frankfort in 1855, "If I had been his brother instead of an old friend he could not have shown more warmth and affectionate delight in seeing me," and Bismarck's wife assured Motley that her husband was nearly out of his wits with delight when he saw Motley's card, and seemed twenty years younger when he was there. In 1872 he was Bismarck's guest at Varzin, and took long walks with him in the woods, in which the German statesman talked with him as simply and freely as when they roomed together in Berlin.

XXII

His first writing that appeared in print was a translation from Goethe, in the *Collegian*; and he spoke at one of the college

exhibitions an essay on Goethe so excellent



JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE.
1749-1832

that Mr. Joseph Caldwell sent it to Madame Goethe, who after reading it said, "I wish to see the first book that young man will write¹."

On his way home from St. Petersburg he spent two days at Weimar, where he formed an acquaintance with her that continued.

Lord Byron's widow frequently talked about Mr. Motley's resemblance to her husband, which she spoke of as most wonderful.



LORD GEORGE GORDON BYRON.
1789-1824

He was not only strikingly handsome, with manners that graced any assembly, but he had a keen ap-

preciation of all that is fine in nature and in art. It is interesting to compare his early letters from Europe with those of most Americans who see the great galleries for the first time, and who have to learn to enjoy them. From the first Motley's instinct is unerring. What he says of the San Sisto, the Apollo Belvidere, Guido's Aurora, Rubens's Descent from the Cross, and Taglioni's dancing, if not especially new is sound and genuine. He was always a man well worth talking with.

XXIII

After the success of his "Dutch Republic" all Europe was open to him. In London he had a standing invitation to dine four times a week at Holland House. He was the guest of Queen Victoria at Balmoral, his eldest daughter was married in Westminster Abbey, and the Queen of the Netherlands crossed the channel to christen one of his granddaughters, while the Princess Louise made a drawing of him which he considered his best portrait. His letters mention all the prominent names of the

time. Marquises and dukes and princes, prime ministers, the magnates of finance, as well as the great artists and authors were all eager for his acquaintance. From Miss Porter, author of "Thaddeus of Warsaw", to Macaulay and Dickens, and Thackeray, he met all the literary people worth know-



JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE, 1818-1894

ing, enjoying most his acquaintance with Froude, whose generous review of the "Dutch Republic" had done much to put upon it the stamp of recognized value.

XXIV

Here is his picture of Thackeray.

"After breakfast I went down to the British museum. I had immersed half an hour in my manuscript when turning my head around I found seated next to me Thackeray, with a file of old newspapers



WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY,
1811-1863

before him writing the ninth number of 'The Virginians'. He took off his spectacles to see who I was, then immediately invited me to dinner the next day (as he seemed always to do everybody he meets), which invitation I could not accept, and he then showed me the page he had been writing, a small delicate legible manuscript. After this we continued our studies. I can conceive nothing more harassing in the literary way than his way of living from hand to mouth. I mean in regard to the way in which he furnishes food for the printer's devil. Here he is just finishing a number which must appear in a few days. Of course whether ill or well, stupid or fertile, he must produce the same amount of fun, pathos, or sentiment. His gun must be regularly loaded and dis-

charged at command. I should think it would wear his life out²."

XXV

In Paris he became acquainted with Guizot, who afterwards undertook the translation of his books into French. When he heard Thiers address the Chambers of Deputies he wrote: "In spite of his funny voice every word that he said was distinctly audible, and his style was so fluent, so limpid, and so logical, his manners so assured and self-possessed, that in spite of the disadvantages of his voice, his figure, and his great round spectacles, which give him the appearance of a small screech-owl, I thought him one of the most agreeable speakers I had ever heard. The Chamber is evidently afraid of him without respecting him, and his consummate brass added to his ready wit makes every one of his speeches gall and worm-wood to his enemies²."

XXVI

In Vienna he was equally fortunate. He wrote: "English society, I regret almost to say, is very spoiling for any other kind.

Yet there is a great charm of manner about the Austrians. The great distinction between Vienna and London company is that here the fine world is composed exclusively of folks of rank and title; *there* every illustration from the world of science, art, letters, politics, and finance, mingle in full proportions with the patricians, and on equal terms. Society so constituted *must* be entertaining and instructive²."

XXVII

Yet he never really enjoyed society. In the midst of his invitations he wrote:

"If I were amusing myself here in London, and if going to dinners were what it is to so many, what it might have been to me at twenty-five, an excitement and a pastime, I should reproach myself. But I do it with deliberation and at a great sacrifice to my own feelings, because I believe it to be as it were my duty, being here in London, and with every door open to me even without knocking, to see something and only once for all of English society²."

Again he wrote in 1864: "Europe has

long since ceased to have attractions for me and I have perpetually regretted that my literary profession, and subsequently my present occupation, have made me and my children exiles²."

XXVIII

Dr. Holmes wrote to him in 1862: "There were many reasons why you might have lost your passion for a Republican Government. The old civilizations welcome you as an ornament to their highest circles—at home you were forced to meet in the upper political spheres much that was not to your taste. But you remained an idealist, as all generous natures do and must. I sometimes think it is the only absolute line of division between men—that which separates men who hug the actual from those who stretch their arms to embrace the possible. I reduce my points of contact with the first class to a minimum. When I meet them I let them talk for the most part, for there is no profit in discussing any living question with men who have no sentiments, and the non-idealists have none. We don't talk music to

those who have no ear ; why talk of the grave human interests to men who have lost all their moral sensibilities, or who never had any²."

XXIX

Though it was he who first uttered that famous Boston *bon mot*, " Give me the luxuries of life and I will dispense with its necessities ", Motley never forgot that the luxuries of aristocratic life are purchased at the expense of the toiling masses. He writes in 1863: " It has been my lot to see a good deal of European aristocracies, and without abating a jot my reverence for and belief in the American people, I have never hesitated to say that a conservatory of tropical fruit and flowers is a very brilliant, fragrant, and luxurious concern. Whether it be worth while to turn a few million freehold farms into one such conservatory is a question of political arithmetic that I hope will always be answered one way on our side of the water²."

Beyond this, his temperament was apt to be morose. He wrote in 1855 to his uncle Edward:

“ The truth is I am so oppressed by constitutional melancholy, which grows upon me very rapidly, as to be almost incapacitated for making myself agreeable. You know how to sympathize with this frame of mind, and I should apologize to you for talking about my blue devils, when I know that you are yourself haunted, except that I thought that by sending a swarm of them across the Atlantic they might have an encounter with the legions there and mutually destroy each other². ”

XXX

But his family life was perfect. He married in 1837 a sister of Park Benjamin, and until her death in 1874 their union was ideal.

He wrote to her from London in 1854: “ My dear, dear Mary:—I can’t tell you how forlorn I am at being separated from you. It seems to me that I can’t go along through the day without seeing you. ” In another letter he uses a favorite figure that without her he is as half of a pair of scissors. He tells her that it is more because

she wishes it than from his own volition that he sees so much of London society, and his letters bear out his statement that his principal pleasure at entertainments is to find enough of interest to describe in his letters to her. It is delightful to see how he differentiates his children—his fragile Lily, his angelic Mary; and his darling Susie, of whom he writes:

“As for Susie, she is the light of our eyes, and the sunshine of our lives; she is perfectly good, amiable, and gentle. Coming so recently from the hand of God she has lost nothing yet of her innocence and happiness, and has all the freshness of day-break still about her. I never saw such insolent happiness, as if she had been put into this prison-house for no other purpose but to sing and chatter all day long. She has brought a good phial full from the fountain of perpetual youth, and she means it to bubble and sparkle as long as possible².”

Add that his letters to his mother are full of love and of detailed accounts of all in his life that will interest her; and that when she died he could write that in all his life

he had never had one word of difference with her, and something is felt of the real nature of this true man and gentleman.

XXXI

In fact he is one of the few men in whose lives closer investigation brings to light only new beauty. His biography is written by Oliver Wendell Holmes, his closest friend, and as a literary man noted for his felicity; and yet one who reads Motley's *Correspondence*, edited with hardly a note by George William Curtis, lays down the book feeling that Holmes has not done Motley justice; that his own letters to his family show a nobler character than Holmes has portrayed. Great as are his histories, his *Correspondence* would rank even higher if it could make the young men and women of coming generations feel how much more than any possible accomplishment it is to live like him a life of high instinct, clean thought, and loyal affection.

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Ralph Waldo Emerson

MAY 23

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

I

Among American authors Emerson is Monadnock, the lone mountain, not only because his method and style are unique, but on account of the loftiness of his character, and his unapproachableness. No one dared to be familiar with him; and his view of life was that of the philosopher, lifted above participation in it, and looking upon it contemplatively.

II

Henry Ward Beecher's advice to a young man was, "First pick out a good grandmother." Emerson picked out good grandmothers as far back as they are known, while on his father's side his ancestors for six generations were with one exception Harvard

graduates and Congregational clergymen. His culture was as, Burroughs says, antenatal¹⁷.

His father died penniless, but the church continued his salary to the widow for six months, gave her \$500 a year for seven years, and allowed her to occupy the parsonage for three years. Mrs. Emerson took in boarders and did the household work; when food ran short, their good Aunt Mary consoled them with stories of heroic endurance. Ralph and his brother had but one great coat between them, and when in the war of 1812 flour went up to \$17 a barrel there was suffering in the family. But they hung together, and sacrificed for one another; as Emerson said afterwards, "Angels dwelt with them, and wove laurels of light for their youthful brows—Toil and Want, Truth and Mutual Faith."

Perhaps it was partly overwork that made two of his brothers break down. Edward, for instance, while pursuing his law studies, took four boys as pupils to employ his leisure moments, read three hours a day to

William H. Prescott, and catalogued books for the Boston Athenæum. "Have you forgotten that all the Emersons overdo themselves?" wrote Ralph Waldo in 1828.

III

The boys were all teachers. William taught school to help Waldo through college, Waldo taught school to help Edward, and Edward taught school to help Charles. As soon as William graduated he opened a school in his mother's house, and was assisted by Waldo, the students becoming members of the family and boarding with them. While still only 18 and 20 years of age, they carried on a finishing school for girls, and were so successful that William was able to go to Germany and leave the school in Waldo's charge. The girls used to take advantage of his bashfulness, asking him on election day to give them a holiday while he voted, though they knew he was a minor. They liked to make him blush.

His three years of school-keeping in Boston brought him nearly \$3,000, at a time when he could live on \$200 a year. This

enabled him to assist his mother and his brothers and to urge William not to hurry home from Europe. He afterwards taught in Chelmsford, and in a private school his brother Edward had established.

IV

But he detested the business.

Here is a passage from his diary in 1820: "I claim and clasp a moment's respite from this irksome school to saunter in the fields of my own wayward thought. But when I came out from the hot, steaming, stoved, stinking, dirty A B C spelling-school, I almost soared and mounted the atmosphere at breathing the free, magnificent air, the breath of life¹."

In 1822 he wrote this to a classmate: "To judge from my own happy feelings I am fain to think that since commencement a hundred angry pens have been daily dashed into the sable flood to deplore and curse the destiny of those who teach. Poor, wretched, hungry, starving souls! How my heart bleeds for you! Better tug at the oar, dig the mine, or saw wood; better sow hemp or

hang with it than sow the seeds of instruction¹."

Yet he was always interested in schools. He was for many years a member of the Concord school committee. When he went to visit a school he forgot that he was an inspector and became a learner. He writes in his journal in 1854: "The way that young woman keeps her school was the best lesson I received at the Preparatory school to-day. She knew so much and carried it so well in her head and gave it out so well that the pupils had quite enough to think of and not an idle moment to waste in noise and disorder. 'Tis the best recipe I know for school discipline⁴."

In an appeal to his townsmen to prize their schools he says: "This town has no sea-port, no cotton, no shoe-trade, no water-power, no gold, lead, coal or rock-oil, no marble; nothing but wood and grass,—not even ice and granite, our New England staples, for the granite is better in Acton and Fitchburg, and our ice, Mr. Tudor said, had bubbles in it. We are reduced

then to manufacture school teachers, which we do for the southern and western market. I advise the town to stick to that staple and make it the best in the world⁴."

V

He entered the Boston Latin school in 1813, Harvard college in 1817, and the Divinity school in 1824. He did not make a brilliant record at any of the three. He was quiet, unobtrusive, only a fair scholar, faultless in conduct, but lacking in masculine vigor. He used to write themes for his classmates at fifty cents each. When he got the \$30 Boylston prize for declamation, he took it home hoping it would buy a shawl for his mother, but found it had to go to pay the baker's bill. He was messenger to the president, a waiter in Commons, and helped himself through by tutoring and by teaching winters in his uncle's school.

VI

In 1829 he became pastor of the Second church in Boston, but was troubled with doubts as to some of the prescribed ordinances. In 1832 he preached a sermon in

which he declared that he could no longer administer the communion, offering his resignation. By a vote of 30 to 24 his resignation was accepted, but his salary was for a time continued. For four years he preached nearly every Sunday, and occasionally afterwards. He might have followed Dr. Orville Dewey in a New Bedford church, but stipulated that he should not be expected to administer the communion, or to offer prayer unless he felt moved to do so; and to these terms the church could not agree. Max Müller says that Emerson told him that his brother William, who had consulted Goethe concerning his doubts as to his fitness for a minister and had been advised to preach, whatever his doubts, and not overthrow the hope of his family, on the way home was caught in an ocean storm, and vowed that if his life should be spared he would give up theology altogether and earn an honest living in some other way. Emerson added that something of the kind might have influenced him, and said that anyhow he felt there was better work

for him to do than to preach from the pulpit¹⁰.

VII

In 1838 he gave the address before the graduating class of the Divinity school of Harvard, in which he declared his faith in moral power, and his belief in an untrammelled religion of the spirit. This caused a long discussion, and led to his separation from the Unitarian church.

His position was misunderstood, and misrepresented; but Holmes well says that Emerson was an iconoclast without a hammer, who took down our idols from their pedestals so tenderly that it seemed like an act of worship¹.

Again he quotes from Emerson: "Luther would cut his head off sooner than write theses against the pope if he had suspected that he was bringing on with all his might the pale negations of Boston Unitarianism³."

Emerson himself said: "I am more of a Quaker than anything else. I believe in

the still, small voice, and that voice is Christ within us⁶."

VIII

The pulpit being closed to him, in 1834 he began lecturing, first on science; afterwards on biography, literature, etc. It was his habit to advertise his subjects, leave his tickets for sale at some central place, and when enough were sold to pay the hall rent begin his course. In 1836 his audience had reached 350, and he was invited to go to other places to lecture. He wrote in his journal in 1834: "Henceforth I design not to utter any speech, poem, or book that is not entirely and peculiarly my work. I will say in public lectures and the like those things which I have meditated for their own sake, and not for the first time with a view to that occasion⁴."

IX

One of his sources of power was his voice. Willis wrote of him in 1851: "Emerson's voice is up to his reputation. It has a curious contradiction in it which we tried in vain to analyze satisfactorily; but it is noble al-



NATHANIEL PARKER WILLIS,
1806-1867

together, and what seems strange is to hear such a voice proceeding from such a body. It is a voice with shoulders in it, which he has not; with lungs in it far larger than his; with a

walk which the public never see; with a fist in it which his own hand never gave him the model for; and with a gentleman in it which his parochial and 'bare-necessaries of life' sort of exterior gives no betrayal of¹."

Lowell says: "I have heard some great speakers and some accomplished orators, but never any that so moved and persuaded men as he. There is a kind of undertone in that rich baritone of his that sweeps our minds from their foothold into deep waters with a drift we cannot and would not resist. And how artfully (for Emerson is a long-

studied artist in these things) does the deliberate utterance, that seems waiting for just the word, seem to admit us partners in the labor of thought, and make us feel as if the glance of humor were a sudden suggestion; as if the perfect phrase lying written there on the desk were as unexpected to him as to us!¹⁸!”

X

He shows his own ideal in his essay on Eloquence: “These are ascending stairs,—a good voice, winning manners, plain speech, chastened, however, by the schools into correctness; but we must come to the main matter, or power of statement, know your fact; hug your fact. For the essential thing is heat, and heat comes of sincerity. Speak what you know and believe; and are personally in it; and are answerable for every word. Eloquence is the power to translate a truth into language perfectly intelligible to the person to whom you speak.”

Alcott says he was a rhapsodist by genius, and the chief of his class. “See our Ion

standing there,—his audience, his manuscript before him,—himself an auditor, as he reads, of the Genius sitting behind him, and to whom he defers, eagerly catching the words⁵.”

XI

He was entirely dependent on his written matter. One day, coming out of a crowded audience which he had disappointed in the middle of his address by mislaying some pages of his manuscript (so distressing him that he took his seat), and which Phillips had immediately delighted with his oration, Emerson said: “I would give a thousand shekels for that man’s secret⁹.”

XII

Two of his most famous addresses were delivered before Harvard college, the Phi Beta Kappa addresses of 1837 and 1867. The former was “The American Scholar”, which Holmes called our intellectual Declaration of Independence. Its thought was “that there is One Man,—present in all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the

whole of society to find the whole man²."

All his leading ideas found expression in this address. Alcott said: "That was the first adequate statement of the new views that really attracted general attention. I shall not forget the delight with which I heard it, nor the mixed confusion, consternation, surprise, and wonder with which the audience listened to it."

Lowell says: "It was an event without any former parallel in our literary annals, a scene to be always treasured in the memory for its picturesqueness and its inspiration. What crowded and breathless aisles, what windows clustering with eager heads, what enthusiasm of approval, what grim silence of foregone dissent²!"

XIII

His first book, "Nature", was published anonymously in September, 1836, and gave expression to his philosophical opinions. In 12 years only 500 copies were sold. Yet Tyndall said: "The first time I ever knew Waldo Emerson was when, years ago, I picked up on a stall a copy of his 'Nature'.

I read it with such delight, and I have never ceased to read it; and if anyone can be said to have given the impulse to my mind, it is Emerson. Whatever I have done, the world owes to him²."

His first collection of essays appeared in 1841; this and the succeeding prose volumes were chiefly composed of his lectures. His "Conduct of Life" was published in 1860. His previous books had sold slowly, but 2,500 copies of this were disposed of in two days after the publication. Theodore Parker wrote of it in the *Massachusetts Quarterly Review*: "He is a very extraordinary man. To no English writer since Milton can be assigned so high a place; even Milton himself, great genius though he was, and great architect of beauty, has not added so many thoughts to the treasury of the race; no, nor been the author of so much loveliness. Emerson is a man of genius such as does not often appear; such as has never appeared before in America, and but seldom in the world. He learns from all sorts of men; but no English writer, we think, is so original²."

XIV

His method of composition was unique. The morning was his time of work, and he took care to guard it from all disturbance. He rose early and went to his study, where he remained until dinner-time, putting down what he had "overheard", as he liked to say. In the afternoon he went to walk. He recalls the remark of Wordsworth's servant, that her master's books were indoors but his library was outside⁶. For the woods were really his study. "I went out early," he said, "to hunt a thought, as a boy might hunt a butterfly, and, when successful, pinned the prize in my cabinet by entering it in my 'Thought-Book'⁶." In the evening he was with his family, sometimes reading aloud, or going back to his study again; but he never worked late, thinking sleep to be the prime necessity for health of body and of mind. He was a sound sleeper, and never got up at night, as some one has fancied, to jot down thoughts that then occurred to him⁴.

XV

After his note-books were filled, he transcribed their contents to a larger commonplace book. He then wrote at the bottom, or in the margin, the subject of each paragraph. When he desired to write an essay, he turned to his note-books, transcribing all his paragraphs on that subject, drawing a perpendicular line through whatever he had thus copied. These separate jottings, perhaps written years apart, and in widely different circumstances and moods, were brought together, arranged in such order as was possible, and were welded together by such matter as was suggested at the time. Alcott relates going once to his study, to find him with many sheets of manuscript scattered about on the floor, which he was anxiously endeavoring to arrange in something like a systematic treatment of the subject in hand at the time. The essay thus prepared was read before an audience to test its quality and construction. Its parts were frequently re-arranged. Perhaps in its construction portions of previously

used lectures were made to do new service. Should the lecture come at last to be put into one of his books, it was pruned of all but the telling sentences².

XVI

This method of composition led to a wonderful power of condensation and to a marvellous compactness of expression. In no other writer are there so many sentences which complete the subject, and which will stand, unsupported and alone, as vindications of the author's thought. An essay packed full of such sentences is hard reading; for each reader must join sentence to sentence, and supply the connections himself².

Theodore Parker compared Emerson's sentences to an army all officers.

Carlyle said the paragraphs were not as beaten ingot, but as a beautiful *bag of duck shot* held together by canvas⁹. Stedman says each sentence is an idea, or an epigram, or an image, or a flash of spiritual light⁸.

Cooke says the style of Carlyle is that of a great body of cavalry rushing impetuous

across an open field to crush down an enemy, or that of an incessant roar of reverberating thunder across the heavens. On the other hand, Emerson's may be compared to quick flash after flash of lightning, to constant sharp electric discharges².

XVII

The habit of nicely fitting his thought with the one right word in his public utterances made him hesitate in ordinary conversation, and grew upon him until "to hear him talk", says Dr. Holmes, "was like watching one crossing a book on stepping-stones³."

"Emerson hates the superlative," says Holmes, again, "but he does unquestionably love the tingling effect of a witty over-statement. The habitual readers of Emerson do not mind an occasional over-statement, extravagance, paradox, eccentricity; they find them amusing and not misleading. But the accountants, for whom two and two always make four, come upon one of these passages and shut the book up as wanting in sanity. Without a certain sensibility to

the humorous, no one should venture on Emerson. If he had seen the lecturer's smile as he delivered one of his playful statements of a runaway truth, fact unhorsed by imagination, sometimes by wit, or humor, he would have found a meaning in his words which the featureless printed page could never show him³."

Here, for instance, is a sentence often quoted: "Now that is the wisdom of a man, in every instance of his labor, to *hitch his wagon to a star*, and see his chore done by the gods themselves."

XVIII

Whether his verse is poetry is a question that has been widely debated. Theodore Parker said that Emerson was a poet lacking the accomplishment of verse; and Lowell in his "Fable for Critics":

"Whose prose is grand verse, while his
verse the Lord knows
Is some of it pr— No, 'tis not even prose."

On the other hand, Sanborn said that instead of its being settled that Emerson could not write poetry it was settled that

he could not write anything else^a; and Whittier: "I regard Emerson as the foremost in the rank of American poets. He has written better things than any of us;" Howells: "Everywhere the poet's felicity of expression appears; a fortunate touch transfuses some dark enigma with color; the riddles are made to shine when most impenetrable; the puzzles are all constructed of gold and ivory and precious stones;" E. P. Whipple: "With no pretension to the finish and smoothness which give grace to the poems of Tennyson, they present frequent surprises of dainty melody, and charm as much by the sweetness of their flow as by the grandeur of their thought².

Stedman says: "The fact is that he was born with certain notes of song; he had the poet's eye and ear, and was a poet just so far as, being a philosopher, he accepted poetry as the expression of thought in its rare and prophetic moods, and just so far as, in exquisite moments, he had the mastery of this form of expression. * * * Yet when poets, even in this day of refinement, have served their technical appren-

ticeship, the depth and frequent splendor of Emerson's verse grow upon them. They half suspect that he had the finest touch of all when he chose to apply it⁸."

XIX

He was himself at first inclined to depreciate his poetry. He wrote to James Freeman Clarke: "I have heard of a citizen who made an annual joke. I believe I have in April or May an annual poetic *conatus* rather than *afflatus*, experimenting to the length of thirty lines or so, if I may judge from the dates of the rhythmical scraps I detect among my manuscript³."

But at heart he had no doubt that he was a poet. He said to Miss Peabody: "I am not a great poet, but whatever is of me is a poet³."

He says again: "I think sometimes that my lack of musical ear is made good to me through my eyes: that which others hear, I *see*. All the soothing, plaintive, brisk or romantic moods which corresponding melodies waken in them, I find in the carpet of the wood, in the margin of the pond, in the

shade of the hemlock grove, or in the infinite variety and rapid dance of the tree-tops as I hurry along⁴."

He said he liked his poems best because it was not he who wrote them; because he could not write them by will;—he could say, "I will write an essay." He added, "I can breathe at any time, but I can only whistle when the right pucker comes⁴."

XX

Here are some of his verses that are sure to live.

"Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world."

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, *Thou must*,
The youth replies, *I can*."

"Hast thou named all the birds without a
gun?
Loved the wood-rose and left it on its
stalk?"

"Not from a vain or shallow thought
His awful Jove young Phidias wrought."

“ The hand that rounded Peter’s dome * * *
Wrought in a sad sincerity;
Himself from God he could not free;
He builded better than he knew;—
The conscious stone to beauty grew.”

XXI

He was never a student of books. It was not in his nature; he could never, he said in after-years, deal with other people’s facts; and he never made the attempt¹. The chief use of books to him was the same as the chief use he drew from his neighbors: to provide himself with intellectual stimulus (“ make my top spin,” he called it), and keep his faculties from rusting. “ They inspire,” he said, or “ they are nothing.” “ He was never comfortable away from them, and yet,” says Mr. Cabot, “ they were pleasing companions, not counsellors, hardly even intimates¹.” He tells of two ancient philosophers one of whom said, “ All that you see, I know;” to which the other replied, “ And all that you know, I see.”

“ I do not read stories,” he said; “ I

never could turn a dozen pages in Don Quixote or Dickens without a yawn. He takes too long to tell a little; too much of the reporter who must fill a column. Why read novels? "

When visiting a student's room at William's he exclaimed: "Some mathematical works here, too. What hours of melancholy mine cost! It was long before I learned that there is something wrong with a man's brain who loves them⁹."

When told of some one who could speak twenty languages he said: "That means he has twenty words for one idea. I would rather have twenty ideas to one word¹²." He says that it would be as foolish to read in the original a book of which he could get a good translation as to swim across the Charles river now that there is a bridge.

XXII

His love for nature was almost passionate. Holmes says: "In his contemplative study of nature he reminds us of Wordsworth, at least in certain brief passages; but he has not the staying power of that long breathed,

not to say long-winded, lover of landscapes. Both are on the most intimate terms with Nature, but Emerson contemplates himself as *belonging to her*, while Wordsworth feels as if she belonged to him³.

Here are two anecdotes that illustrate this:

Two boys whom he had invited to come to see him he took into the woods. As they entered it they took their hats off. "Boys," said Emerson, "here we recognize the presence of the universal Spirit. The breeze says to us in its own language, 'How-do-you-do;' and we have already taken our hats off, and answered it with our own 'How-do-you-do, how-do-you-do,' and all the waving branches of the trees, and all the flowers, and the field of corn yonder, and the singing brook, and the insect and the bird,—every living thing and things we call inanimate feel the same divine universal impulse while they join with us, and we with them, in the greeting of the Universal Spirit³."

"One red rose of the most brilliant color

she called our attention to especially; its 'hue' was so truly 'angry and brave' that I involuntarily repeated Herbert's line,—

'Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,'—

from the verses which Emerson had first repeated to me so long ago. Emerson looked at the rose admiringly, and then as if by a sudden impulse lifted his hat gently, and said with a low bow, 'I take off my hat to it³.' "

XXIII

He did not look upon nature like the scientist or the artist, but saw in it only a garment giving to wise eyes the hint of what lay underneath⁴. He said in his lecture on "The Use of Natural History", "It is in my judgment the greatest office of natural science (and one which as yet is only to be discharged) to explain man to himself¹."

Yet Agassiz declared that he had a scientific method of the severest kind, and could not be carried away by any theories; and Tyndall that in his case poetry, with the joy of a Bacchanal, took her little brother science by hand, and cheered him with im-

mortal laughter ; by Emerson scientific conceptions were continually transmuted into the finer forms and warmer life of an ideal world.

As in Shakspeare, so in him poetic instinct took the place of learning, and gave him intuitions of inner relations that scientists afterward developed.

The 1849 edition of " Nature " has these words:

" A subtle chain of countless rings
The next unto the farthest brings;
The eye reads omens where it goes,
And speaks all languages the rose;
And striving to be man, the worm
Mounts through all the spires of form."

This was printed ten years before Darwin's " Origin of Species ", and twenty years or more before the " Descent of Man³."

XXIV

The purpose of his first trip to Europe, in 1832, he said was to find new affinities between him and his fellow men. Art and scenery were subordinate objects⁶. He saw

Landor, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, but the only friendship he formed was with Carlyle, and that was as curious as it was intimate.



THOMAS CARLYLE, 1759-1881

He did not appreciate "Sartor Resartus". "O Carlyle!" he exclaims in his diary, "The merit of glass is not to be seen, but to be seen through; but every crystal and lamina of the Car-

lyle glass shows⁶." Neither cared much for the other's ideas. To each, indeed, the leading idea of the other, the message he wished to bear his generation, was a delusion¹.

On Emerson's second visit Carlyle found that his aversion to Emersonianism equalled his love of Emerson. "We had immense talking with him here," he writes, "but find that he did not give us much to chew the cud upon. He is a pure, high-minded man, but I think his talent is not quite as

high as I had anticipated." At another time he says, "Good of him I could get none, except from his friendly looks and elevated, exotic, polite ways⁶."

XXV

Yet their correspondence continued through life. Carlyle said that Emerson was the cleanest mind now living. "Now and then a letter comes from him," he writes, "and amid all the smoke and mist of this world it is always as a window flung open to the azure. During all this last weary work of mine, his words have nearly the only ones about the thing done to which I have inwardly responded²."

George Eliot wrote of Carlyle's preface to Emerson's first essays: "This is a world worth abiding in while one man can thus venerate and love another⁶."



Her own one conversation with him was remarkable.

MARY ANN EVANS CROSS, 1819-'80

She told him that she liked Rousseau's "Confessions" best of all books. He started; and then said, "So do I." She wrote the next day that the American stranger was the one real man she had seen⁶.

XXVI

On his second trip to Europe in 1847 his social opportunities were unlimited. In London a thousand persons came to hear his lecture on Montaigne, and he so impressed himself on the people that in 1874 the Independent party among the students of Glasgow university put him in nomination for the office of lord-rector, the other candidates being Disraeli and Forster. Emerson received 500 votes against 700 for Disraeli.

But he cared little for general society. Even as a school boy there was a certain aloofness which never allowed his school-mates to consider him quite one of themselves; he was not a school boy, but a boy at school. This peculiar distinction he preserved through his life; without stiffness or churlishness, affectation or assumption, he always put and kept a distance between himself and others, which rendered his personal influence, apart from his writings

and his oratory, smaller than that of almost any other great teacher. It is noteworthy that his intimates always call him *Mr. Emerson*. Enthusiasm never got beyond the hem of his garment; and this though the man was as simple, transparent, and unaffected as if he had been a great naturalist, instead of a cultivator of moral science⁶.

Dr. Holmes said there were fences between him and some of his nearest friends. Emerson says himself: "Most of the persons whom I see in my own house I see across the gulf. I cannot go to them nor they come to me. Nothing could exceed the frigidity and labor of my speech¹."

XXVII

The men he enjoyed were the men who



AMOS BRONSON ALCOTT, 1799-1888

"made his top spin". This is well illustrated in his relations to Alcott, of whom he wrote in 1837: "His conversation is sublime;" and yet again, "When I go to

talk with Alcott it is not so much to get his thoughts as to watch myself under his influence¹."

Among his most intimate associates was



Thoreau, whom he might be said to have discovered, and to whom he gave his literary position. Thoreau came to live at his house, and they knew one another well.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU, 1817-1862 He took much more pains to edit Thoreau's papers after his death than he ever put upon any publications of his own. Yet he said of him: "I told H. T. that his freedom was in the form, but he does not disclose new matter. I am familiar with all his thoughts; they are mine, quite originally dressed¹."

XXVIII

Still more remarkable was his relation to Margaret Fuller, who also stayed for weeks

at his house and really threw her passionate nature against his. But "Emerson seemed to her," says Mrs. Howe, borrowing Margaret's own figure, "the palm-tree in the desert, graceful and admirable, bearing aloft a waving crest, but spreading no sheltering and embracing branches⁶."

He speaks in his journal of these "strange, cold-warm, attractive-repelling conversations with Margaret, whom I always admire, most revere when I nearest see, and sometimes love; yet whom I freeze, and who freezes me to silence, when we promise to come nearest¹."

XXIX

But it was different in his home circle. When he had seen Emerson there, Channing said: "I do confess myself fascinated. He had been before to me an icy pinnacle only, away in the ether, but as I came nearer I found there was the verdure of sweet affections and the beauteous blossoms of lowly thoughts and common herbs around the base. His family delighted me; his fondness for his little boy, his tenderness towards

his wife, the unaffected politeness and courtesy and the merry cheerfulness of the man did more to win me than all his lofty contemplations⁶."

He was twice married. Ellen Tucker was seventeen when he became engaged to her, and she lived less than two years after her marriage in 1829. Little is known of her except her remarkable beauty, her fatal delicacy of constitution, and her buoyant spirit⁶.

In 1836 he married a sister of Dr. Charles Jackson, of anæsthetic fame, and changed her name from Lydia to Lidian, because it fitted better with Emerson.

"The soul of faith" he called her. She was a woman of royal appearance, and his common appellation for her was "Queenie".

XXX

In his home at Concord he was idolized. He was always prompt in all his duties as a citizen. He used to go regularly to town meeting, where he sat among his neighbors and watched the plain men of the town manage their affairs. He seldom took part

in the debate, and then with great hesitancy and modesty, but came home to praise the eloquence and strong good-sense of his neighbors⁴.

He joined the Fire Association, and its leathern buckets and baize bags always hung over the stairs in the side entry; and he went in the neighborly fashion of those days to fires in the woods, and fought fire with his pine bough side by side with his neighbors⁴.

After the burning of his house in 1872 he went to Europe and to Egypt, going up the Nile on a boat. He was often gay when riding about on shore on his donkey, but made homesick speeches, and would have been glad to go straight home. When he reached Concord in May, he found the whole town assembled down to the babies in their wagons. He was escorted between two rows of smiling school children to his house, where a triumphal arch of leaves and flowers had been erected. It had been restored with some improvement, but the study was unchanged, with its books and manuscripts,

with its pictures and keepsakes in their wonted arrangement¹.

On the day of the funeral nearly every building in town bore over its entrance door a large black and white rosette, with other sombre drapery³.

XXXI

Although he did not admit friends to intimacy, he held himself open to all who sought him. He says in his journal: "I will assume that a stranger is judicious and benevolent. If he is, I will thereby keep him so. If he is not, it will tend to instruct him⁴."

He was especially an inspiration to young men. He wrote to Miss Peabody: "My special parish is young men inquiring their way in life." Lowell says: "He was to the generous youth the sound of the trumpet that the young soul longs for;" and Hawthorne: "His mind acted upon other minds of a certain constitution with a wonderful magnetism, and drew many men upon long pilgrimages to speak to him face to face²⁰."

XXXII

In his character Emerson seemed lifted above the human.

Hawthorne says: "It was impossible to dwell in his vicinity without inhaling more or less the mountain atmosphere of his lofty thought²⁰;" and Lowell: "He is as sweetly high-minded as ever, and when one meets him the fall of Adams seems a false report. Afterwards we feel of our throats and are startled by the tell-tale lump there²¹."

Frederika Bremer, in her "Homes of the New World",

says: "One may quarrel with Emerson's thoughts, with his judgment, but not with himself. That which struck me most, as distinguishing him



FREDERIKA BREMER, 1801-1865

from most other human beings, is nobility. He is a born gentleman."

He rarely meddled with what is petty or

ignoble. Like his "Humble Bee", the
 "yellow-breeched philosopher", whom he
 speaks of as

"Wiser far than human seer,"
 and says of him,

"Aught unsavory or unclean
 Hath my insect never seen,"

he went through the world where coarser
 minds find so much that is repulsive to
 dwell upon,

"Seeing only what is fair,
 Sipping only what is sweet³."

XXXIII

Ripley said: "The secret of his strength



GEORGE RIPLEY, 1802-1880

lies in the pro-
 found sincerity
 of his nature *
 * * in his free-
 dom from all af-
 fection, in his
 attachment to
 reality, in his
 indignant rejec-
 tion of all varn-
 ish. * * *

He looks at the universe with his own eyes,

and presents a report of his vision, *like a man under oath*."

"Do not concern yourself about consistency," he says. "The moment you putty and plaster your expressions to make them hang together, you have begun a weakening process. Take it for granted the truths will harmonize; and as for the falsities and mistakes, they will speedily die of themselves. If you *must* be contradictory, let it be clean and sharp as the two blades of scissors meet".

He once read a poem before the Phi Beta Kappa society on Washington, and suddenly sat down in the midst of it. A friend afterwards inquired the cause, and was told the poem was not what he thought it was. As he read, he became dissatisfied with it and could not go on².

While he was preaching in East Lexington one of his old sermons he stopped and said quietly, "The passage I have just read I do not believe, but it was wrongly placed⁴."

XXXIV

His loftiness of character seemed ever to

lift him above participation in what concerned him to a height from which he could survey himself and what happened to him as a disinterested spectator.

Louise Alcott says that when his house



LOUISE MAY ALCOTT, 1833-1888

was burning and she stood guarding the scorched, wet pile, Mr. Emerson passed by, and, surveying the devastation with philosophic calmness, only said, in an-

swer to her lamentations: "I see my library under a new aspect. Could you tell me where my good neighbors have flung my boots¹⁴?"

XXXV

When he gave an address before the Baptist college at Waterville, the clergyman who presided prayed that the audience might be preserved from ever again hearing such transcendental nonsense. Emerson asked

his name, and remarked: "He seems a very conscientious, plain-spoken man⁶."

In 1876 he delivered an address at the University of Virginia; but most of the audience gave up attempting to hear, whispered, talked, and laughed aloud, until Emerson, after contending with the din for half an hour, sought out a suitable passage and swiftly came to a close. His comment was: "They are very brave people down there, and say just what they think¹."

At dinner one day there was mention of a woman well-known as a lion-hunter; and in speaking of her Mrs. Emerson used the word "snob". Mr. Emerson objected: the word was too harsh,—he didn't like that ugly class of words beginning with "sn". His wife inquired how *he* would characterize the lady. "I should say"—very slowly—"she is a person having great sympathy with success⁹."

He was a warm friend of Father Taylor, the clergyman of the Boston seamen. When the Methodists objected to his friendship for Emerson as a Unitarian saying that the Unitarians must go to hell, "It does look

so," said Father Taylor, "but I am sure of one thing: if Emerson goes to hell he will change the climate there, and emigration will set that way³."

XXXVI

For years Emerson was especially known as a transcendentalist. This was the name given to a club formed in 1836 by such men and women as George Ripley, James Freeman Clarke, Alcott, Channing, Theodore Parker, Margaret Fuller, and Elizabeth Peabody. James Freeman Clarke says: "We called ourselves the club of the like-minded. I suppose because no two of us thought alike." "Or rather, we may say," adds Mr. Cabot with justice, "because, in spite of all differences of opinion, they were united by a common impatience of routine thinking¹."

Dickens wrote in his *American Notes*: "On inquiring what this appellation might be supposed to signify, I was given to understand that whatever was unintelligible would be certainly Transcendental;" but he added that if he had lived in Boston he

should have wanted to belong to the club³.

Alcott said of transcendentalism, "It means that there is more in the mind than enters it through the senses⁹."

To Emerson transcendentalism was to be faithful to the revelations that come to the soul, and are recognized by it as true⁹. Intuition to him meant something very different from infallible knowledge. It meant the openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power from the Divine mind. His reverence for intuitions and his distrust of reasoning were only the preference for truth over our past apprehension of truth¹. He could see, but he could not prove; he could announce, but he could not argue. His intuitions were his soul guide; what they revealed appeared to him self-evident; the ordinary paths by which men arrive at conclusions were closed to him. He was not a philosopher, but a seer⁶.

XXXVII

Emerson says that the only result of the Transcendental Club was to initiate the little quarterly called *The Dial*. Margaret

Fuller was the first editor, and was succeeded by Emerson. The first number came out in July, 1840. Each number contained 136 octavo pages, and it was published at \$3 a year. Among the principal contributors were Theodore Parker, George Ripley, J. S. Dwight, Cranch, James Freeman Clarke, Bronson Alcott, Thoreau, Lowell, Charles A. Dana, Henry Tuckerman, Elizabeth Peabody. It was the first means of introducing Thoreau to the reading public.

Emerson had been assistant editor, and at the end of the second year became sole editor and also its banker. The circulation never exceeded 300, and his connection with it cost him not only the worry he had foreseen, but several hundred dollars, not easily replaced by a philosopher or spared by the father of a family.

It expired in 1844. Years afterwards quantities of unsold copies were discovered and sent to Emerson, who gave of them to all who would, and burned or wasted the remainder. Had they been preserved to

this day they would have been worth a small fortune⁶.

XXXVIII

“ We are a little wild here,” wrote Emerson to Carlyle, in 1840, “ with numberless projects of social reform. Not a reading man but has his draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket. I am gently mad myself⁶.” But his humor and his shrewd common-sense saved him from extremes.

In 1837 Horace Mann reported that Emerson summed up the commandments into “ Sit aloof ”, and “ Keep a diary² ”. Brook Farm seemed to him little more than a highly intellectual picnic, and he determined that his service must for the present consist in standing still and waiting; that he must needs “ submit to the degradation of owning bank stock and seeing poor men suffer⁶.”

In 1841 he tried the experiment of having his servants eat at the same table. The second girl consented, but the cook refused, and when they sent for the second girl to come to breakfast she had already eaten¹.

He was in sympathy with the anti-slavery movement from the first, he freely gave his assistance, and he calmly faced a howling mob of Bostonians at a meeting called by Wendell Phillips. John Brown was several times in Concord, and found a hearty welcome at Emerson's house. Yet he did not ally himself with the abolitionists. His plan of emancipation was to raise two thousand millions of dollars to purchase the slaves. But when the Emancipation proclamation came Emerson said: "This act makes that the lives of our heroes have not been sacrificed in vain. It makes a victory of our defeats²."

XXXIX

There has been some criticism of Emerson that he was a thrifty man. He was in some respects fortunate. Brought up as he was in poverty and self-denial, his teaching brought him what was then a large income; and when he married at 26 he was pastor at a comfortable salary of an important church. After his first wife's death he received from her estate some \$22,000, besides the house

in which he lived. But though he retained his early frugal habits, seldom paying for work that he could do himself, he was always hospitable, and was generous with a right hand that never told the left. Mr. Alcott used to tell how Emerson would come to visit his straitened family, the tribulations of which his daughter has revealed in "Little Women", and would chat a while leaning against the mantle; when he had gone a ten-dollar gold piece would be found on the mantle. He had to lecture in 1839, though not feeling well or able to do it, because he had involved himself seriously in publishing American editions of Carlyle's books, putting Carlyle into his debt for some \$700 that Carlyle never paid because he never knew of it. Again he filled a lecture engagement in New York that he might aid Alcott in going to England to assist in establishing a school which should fulfil the idea begun in Boston.

XL

From 1850 on for twenty years each winter meant for him at least two months of

arduous travel from Maine to the new States beyond the Mississippi, speaking almost every night, except Sundays, during that time⁴.

In 1847 he writes that the most he had ever received was \$500 for ten lectures, while the country lectures brought him only ten dollars each.

From his lectures in London he had hoped to receive a thousand dollars, but the profits were only \$480; for his western lectures in the winter of 1850-51 he received about \$500; but his series of readings in Boston in 1872 brought him over \$1400^{1 2}.

He writes to his brother in 1862: "The first of January has found me in quite as poor a plight as the rest of the Americans. Not a penny from my books since last June, which usually yield five or six hundred a year. No dividends from the bank nor from Lidian's Plymouth property, and almost all income from lectures has quite ceased, so that your letter found me in a study how to pay three or four hundred dollars with fifty¹." After the burning of

his house his classmate Lowell brought him a check for \$5,000, the contribution of a few friends for present needs, and by subscription \$11,620 was made up. At first he resisted, but on reflection saw there was no reason for declining and accepted. So his last years were spent in comfort.

He could never abide being in debt. He wrote on a photograph he gave to a friend: "Would'st thou, seal up the avenues of ill? Pay every debt as if God wrote the bill."

XLI

Holmes says Emerson's appearance was eminently that of a scholar, the descendant of scholars³. Froude was struck by his resemblance to Cardinal Newman⁶.

Lowell speaks of

"the face half rustic, half divine,
Self-poised, sagacious, streaked with humor
fine";

and he curiously notes—

"—the wise nose's firm-built aquiline."

He was tall,—six feet in his shoes,—erect until his latter days, neither very thin nor stout in frame (he weighed 145 when in

California), with rather long and unusually sloping shoulders, and long neck, but well poised head, and dignity of carriage. His eyes were very blue, his hair dark brown, his complexion clear and always with good color.

In dress he was always neat and inconspicuous, wearing black clothes and silk hat in the city, and dark gray with soft felt hat in the country⁴.

XLII

John Burroughs says: "Look at his pic-



ture there,—large, strong features on a small face and head,—no blank spaces; all given up to expression; a high, predaceous nose, a sinewy brow, a massive,

RALPH WALDO EMERSON. 1803-1882 benevolent chin. In most men there is more face than feature, but here is a vast deal more feature than face, and a corresponding alertness and

emphasis of character. Indeed, the man is made after this fashion. He is all type; his expression is transcendent. His mind has the hand's pronounced anatomy, its cords and sinews and multiform articulations and processes, its opposing and co-ordinating power¹⁷."

XLIII

Holmes says that hope is at the bottom of every essay of Emerson's, as it was at the bottom of Pandora's box. Of his Phi Beta Kappa orations in 1837 and 1867, the second is more sanguine than the first³. He rejoiced in Fuller's maxim: "An ounce of cheerfulness is worth a pound of sadness to serve God with⁹."

"Shun the negative side," he counsels. "Never worry people with your contrition, nor with dismal views of politics or society. Never name sickness; even if you could trust yourself on that perilous topic, beware of unmuzzling a valetudinarian, who will give you enough of it³."

After an agreeable conversation with a gentleman who had suffered from ill-health

Mr. Emerson remarked, "You formerly bragged of ill-health, sir. I trust you are all right now¹²."

It is curious that both Hawthorne and Frederika Bremer used in their diaries the same expression about Emerson—that he came with a sunbeam in his countenance; while Curtis has spoken of the "smile that breaks over his face like day over the sky;" and once said that at Emerson's house it seemed always morning².

Stedman says that in gentle bearing, in his sweetness, persuasiveness, and charm of smile and voice, he was not excelled by any person of our time⁸; and Underwood that his smile was a benediction.

XLIV

There were consumptive tendencies in his family, and in early manhood he was obliged on account of chest complaints to go south to South Carolina and Florida, where he met Achille Murat, nephew of Napoleon, at that time a planter in Tallahassee⁶. He wrote, "The lungs in their lobes sing sexton and sorrow whenever I only ask them to shout a sermon for me¹."

His thirtieth year, which proved fatal to Edward, and which Charles did not quite reach, was a critical period for him, too; but after that he grew stronger, and did more work than most men are able to do. Curiously enough he always ate pie for breakfast, and yet never complained of dyspepsia.

In 1866 he read to his son his "Terminus", beginning

" It is time to be old,
To take in sail: "

and for the first time betrayed the fact that he felt himself growing old. The year 1867 was about the limit of his working life. During the last five years he hardly answered a letter³.

XLV

The failure of his strength, and especially of his memory, showed in the lectures given in Boston in the winter of 1871-2, but had hardly been generally perceived until after the sickness following the exposure, excitement, and fatigue undergone on the morning of July, 1872, when he and his wife

awoke to escape, imperfectly clad, from their house in flames, into the rain, and then had worked beyond their strength with their zealous and helpful neighbors in saving their effects⁴.

The last address he wrote was at the unveiling of the statue of the minute-men, April 19, 1875; and though in his last years he ventured from time to time with the help of his daughter Ellen to read papers before select audiences, he declined social invitations, saying that he was no longer fit for conversation and dared not make visits^{1 2}.

In April, 1882, he caught cold and increased it by walking out in the rain, through forgetfulness omitting to put on his overcoat⁴. He died April 30, and was buried not far from the graves of Hawthorne and of Thoreau.

Doubtless he realized what he had written in his journal in 1837: "I said when I awoke, 'After some more sleepings and walkings I shall lie on this mattress sick; then dead; and through my gay entry they will carry these bones. Where shall I be then?' I lifted my head and beheld the

spotless orange light of the morning beaming up from the dark hills into the wide universe⁴."

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John Godfrey Saxe

JUNE 2

John Godfrey Saxe

I

Saxe is perhaps the only American writer



JOHN GODFREY SAXE, 1816-1887

who would be referred to as a comic poet. Charles Godfrey Leland and Wm. Allen Butler are best known for their humorous rhymes, but they have written seriously, and have

never been so widely recognized as Saxe. The present generation hardly realizes how prominent a place he held forty years ago. His poems were in the "Blue and Gold" series, and in the preface to the "Money King and Other Poems", published in 1859,

he says that his first volume has passed through sixteen editions. In the edition of his poems in one volume, imprint of 1873, the plates are so worn that many of the letters and some of the words are missing. In the writer's boyhood there were few school exhibitions at which "Phaethon's Ride" or "Pyramus and Thisbe" or "The Proud Miss McBride" did not appear. But to the present reading public he is little known. The verses of Lowell and Holmes are so much funnier, and at the same time so much more delicate and forceful, that the after-dinner rhymes of Saxe seem trivial.

II

He was born in Highgate, Vt., June 2, 1816, and was graduated from Middlebury college in 1839, in the same class with the two twin Wrights who so long held an honorable place in the ranks of New York teachers. Truman K. Wright, Ph.D., of Elbridge, writes as follows concerning Saxe's college days:

"He entered college in the sophomore year when 20 years old. He was six feet

two inches tall, straight as an arrow. He used tobacco so much that the girls called him 'Tobacco Saxe'. He was a fair scholar in the classics, quite moderate in mathematics. His *suaviter in modo* always helped him in his recitations. He could far outdo any member of his class in politeness gotten up for the occasion when called upon to answer a question on which he was unprepared.

"His room-mate Wicker was a fine scholar in mathematics, and once solved a difficult problem for the next day's recitation by working until midnight; and when he went to bed he left the solution on his writing desk. Saxe came in late, saw the problem worked, and examined it somewhat. When the bell rang in the morning Wicker was sound asleep. Saxe gathered up the manuscript, noiselessly closed the door, and hastened to the recitation room, where he spread out the solution upon the blackboard. Great was the astonishment to see Saxe solve the most difficult problem of the day; in fact, the astonishment was so great that though intended to be a joke on Wicker, it proved to be a joke on Saxe.

III

“ He was gifted as a debater. It was always pleasant to listen to him in the Lyceum. Whenever literary entertainments were gotten up Saxe had a prominent place. He and his classmate Carlos Bisbee were rival poets. On one occasion when Bisbee had read a few stanzas before the class, after the class was dismissed Saxe exclaimed with considerable stress: ‘ Bisbee a poet! Bisbee write poetry! He doesn’t know enough to steal a good poem!’ Ten years after his graduation I met Saxe at Hamilton college, where he read a capital poem, which was highly appreciated. Only those who have heard him and seen him deliver his poems can fully appreciate them.

“ He was gifted in conversation, a constant talker, and had a faculty of amusing his listeners. He never hesitated for a reply. He was generally among the last to enter the chapel for morning prayers. On one occasion the students apparently had all come in and the exercises were about to begin, when Saxe came hurrying in, his long

overcoat flung over his shoulders. As he was hastening to his seat the president addressed him, 'Good morning, Mr. Saxe.' He turned toward the president with a graceful salute, and with a deep, clear voice returned the greeting, 'Good morning President Bates.' No one else in that audience could have returned the president's greeting under those circumstances so imperturbably.

IV

"Three years after graduation my brother and I returned to Middletown to attend commencement. There we met Saxe. I said to him, 'I supposed you were dead.' It had been so reported. 'Yes,' he said 'I have been very sick, and taken any amount of vile medicine. You know a man will eat alligators to save his life.'

"After the commencement exercises the faculty and alumni and students were treated to a dinner in the grove, marching there in a long procession. Saxe took his position between my brother and me, thinking it something of a novelty. He was dressed in white from top to toe and presented quite a

commanding figure. While on the march he spoke up loudly so all could hear, 'Wright, there was one in our class who was never so wide awake but that he was a Knapen.' Our classmate Daniel Mason Knapen was next ahead of us. When we arrived at the grove and were seated at the table, Saxe extended his long arm to a tempting goblet, and sipping, turned away and spouted it from him in disgust. 'What is it Saxe?'—'It is small beer, very small, *exigüe*.' "

V

Dr. Wright also permits us to quote from a letter written Feb. 19, 1898 from Edwin Everts, another classmate:

"As to reminiscences of our genial, witty, and multifariously talented Saxe, I have very little to contribute that would add much. It is true Saxe and myself during our junior and senior years were about as intimately associated as any other two of our class, save those bound by ties of consanguinity. We were interchangeable guests almost daily; were in attendance at the extra

winter term of our senior year, and read, recited and talked French together under the instruction of Prof. Stoddard. Both were members of a secret society entitled 'The Tub Philosophers, *a la* Diogenes,' and with other members wrote essays, etc., for the local press and some other journals. Saxe's taste ran more in the line of general literature and criticism than to mathematics, and his translations of the classics though not the most literal were exceedingly elegant. In mathematics we were in accord, but in politics were as divergent as whig and democrat as democrats and republicans now are. He was a candidate of his party for governor of the State of Vermont, and ran as well as any other democrat of his time would. He was always genial, jovial, inclined to be waggish, fond of jokes, and as naturally inclined to punning as to rhyming; and until the dark days of ill-health and sad bereavement came upon him he was the most agreeable, companionable of all my associates. Many pleasant anecdotes might be recalled from our meetings and associa-

tions during and subsequent to our college life, but they would hardly be of service to Mr. Bardeen.

“The closing chapter of Saxe’s life I am not as familiar with as many others are, and for the love I bear him am glad I am not. A tear and a sigh are my sincerest offering.”

VI

From still another classmate, Melvin Lamont Gray, a lawyer in St. Louis, Dr. Wright permits us to extract the following from a letter dated April 25, 1898:

“My idea is that he was rather careless in the studies of the course, but was well-read in English literature, both prose and poetry, and paid more attention to and spent more time on the best English authors than the prescribed course of study. He was fond of quoting from the authors he read, and studied to make a good conversationalist, in which in college and subsequently he excelled.

“He married Miss Sophia N. Solace, of Bridgeport, Vt., sister of our classmate, Calvin Theodore Solace. I knew her from

early girlhood. She was an excellent woman, and made him a worthy and devoted wife. They had two sons and three daughters, beautiful girls, but the girls all died of consumption from 19 to 23 years of age.

“ The eldest son, John, married a daughter of Judge Bosworth of New York, who edited several volumes of New York reports, known as Bosworth’s reports. They had one son, named John G. Saxe after his grandfather. Shortly after both parents died of consumption, and this John G. junior was taken by a sister of John G.’s wife, and was reared by this sister. Her husband was a brother of John G. Saxe’s, the two brothers having married sisters. Young John G. graduated last year from McGill university, Montreal, with distinguished honor, and is now studying law in New York city.

“ Saxe was tall and erect, of fine presence and manners, and had the faculty of making himself agreeable and entertaining, with a strong spice of egotism. He was a society man, and cultivated the art of being entertaining. He gave several readings of his

poems in St. Louis, and generally stopped with me, twice accompanied by his wife, and once by his wife and eldest daughter, a beautiful girl. His first reading was attended by an immense audience, who, having read more or less of his writings, were desirous of seeing and hearing him."

VII

At the suggestion of Dr. Wright, Rev. Byron Sunderland of Washington, who has just resigned the pastorate of one of the Presbyterian churches there, after more than 40 years' service, writes as follows:

"He had to economise, like many others then struggling for educational and professional honors. In person he was a tall, lank, awkward, shambling-gated fellow with a fair skin and a deep gray eye. He was a quiet but open-hearted and kindly disposed young man—and on several occasions gave promise of what he afterwards became as a punster and poet.

"As showing his versatility in adapting means to ends—in case of sudden emergency, I remember calling at his room one morn-

ing on my way to chapel for early prayers, when I found him just out of bed with his black pants in one hand and a stick of sealing-wax in the other, bending over the feeble flame of a sputtering tallow candle end and trying with the melted wax to patch a rent which had unfortunately been made in his nether garments the night before. As I looked in upon him he caught my eye with a most quizzical expression, and pointing to the rent in his dark pants, which now showed at a little distance off to be only a blood-red spot as of a discoloration or a stain, he remarked '*That* now I take it has been done with neatness and dispatch. Wait a moment and I will go with you to the chapel.' And soon we were jogging on together.

"He was a favorite both in college and in the town, and subsequently married Miss Solace of Bridgeport, then regarded as the belle of her town."

VIII

After graduation he practised law in Franklin county, Vermont, until 1850, when

he became editor of the Burlington Sentinel until 1856. He was superintendent of schools for Franklin county in 1847-8, and State's attorney for Chittenden county 1850-51. He was the democratic candidate for governor of Vermont in 1859 and 1860, but was not successful. From 1860 on he devoted himself to literature, writing and lecturing. He was for a time editor of the Albany Evening Journal, and lived in Albany until his death. He was a frequent contributor to the Knickerbocker and Harper's magazines, and occasionally read poems before college and other societies. But bereavement fell upon him, and he became a victim to confirmed melancholy, living in seclusion at his son's house in Albany, until he died March 31, 1887. The sad termination to his life reminds one of the well-known anecdote of Liston, the famous comedian. One day there came to Abernethy a man who sought cure for a melancholia so confirmed and constant that it threatened to undermine his reason. "Pooh! Pooh!" the famous surgeon replied; "if that is all you are easily cured; go to Convent Garden

and see Liston.”—“ Alas! ” his patient replied, “ I am Liston! ”

IX

In his preface to “ Progress ” in 1849 he says:

“ In christening the book I have chosen for several reasons to conform to the customary nomenclature which allows every kind of literature to be ‘ Poetry ’ that is not written in the fashion of prose, yet I have no quarrel with that nicer rule of modern criticism which assigns to all metrical composition of a mainly facetious or satirical character a place rather on the border than fairly within the domain of legitimate poetry.”

There is little of his verse that would come under the classification of poetry in any true sense of the word. He writes with facility and occasionally with felicity, but his imagination seldom reaches beyond fancy. One has only to compare “ The Story of Life ” with Shakspere’s Seven Ages in “ As you like it ” by which it is evidently suggested; or his “ Spēs est Vates ” with

Longfellow's "Resignation"; or "My Boyhood" with Hood's "I remember, I remember" to see the difference between the versifier and the poet.

X

His wit is so dependent on punning that it seldom gets loose from it. The same pun recurs again and again. Thus in "The Times":

"When pattern wives no thrifty arts possess,
Save that of weaving—fustian for the press,
Write Lyrics, heedless of their scorching
buns,
Dress up their Sonnets, but neglect their
sons."

And in "A Benedict's Appeal":

"You may dream of poetical fame,
But your wishes may chance to mis-
carry,—
The way of sending one's name
To posterity, Charles, is to marry!
And here I am willing to own,
After soberly thinking upon it,
I'd very much rather be known
For a beautiful son, than a sonnet."

He was so anxious for puns that he did not hesitate to mispronounce to secure them, as in "Orpheus and Eurydice":

" ' Eurydice; *Eu-ryd-i-ce!* ' "

He cried as loud as loud could be—

(A singular sound, and funny withal,

In a place where nobody *rides* at all!)"

But as to rhymes, in a single poem he makes Potter's rhyme with daughters and quarters.

XI

Nor was his muse clean-minded. Not seldom he indicates even by rhymes words that he dares not print and should not have thought, a flagrant example of which will be found in "Tom Brown's Day at Gotham". Over and over again are passages like this:

" ' Sir, curse your paper!—send the thing
to '—

Well,

The place he names were impolite to
tell."

Only the things are often more impolite
to tell,

illustrating what he says in "*Lucus A Non*":

"You'll oft find in books, rather ancient
than recent,
A gap in the page marked with *cetera
desunt*,
By which you may commonly take it for
granted
The passage is wanting without being
wanted;
And may borrow, besides, a significant hint
That *desunt* means simply *not* decent to
print."

Here again he sacrifices pronunciation, as
in "*Othello, the Moor*":

"Until the husband was fairly demented,
And railed at his wife, like a cowardly
varlet,
And gave her an epithet—rhyming with
scarlet."

XII

Perhaps the melancholy of his later life
came partly from disgust at having chosen
a career that made him expected to be
funny.

The Disadvantages of a Comedian 245

He has pointed out, though not nearly so well as Holmes, the disadvantages of being regarded as a comedian.

“ My dear young friend, whose shinning wit
Sets all the room ablaze,
Don't think yourself ‘ a happy dog ’
For all your merry ways;
But learn to wear a sober phiz,
Be stupid, if you can,
It's such a very serious thing
To be a funny man! ”

Again in a Brown university poem he says:

“ A worthy parson, once upon a time,
Weary of listening to the sober rhyme
That, of a winter's evening, chanced to fall
From a young poet in a lecture hall,
His disappointment openly confessed,
And thus his censure to a friend expressed:—

‘ The poem, sir, is well enough no doubt,
But so much preaching one could do without;

A little wit had pleased me more by half;
I didn't come to learn, I came to laugh! ’ ”

His few attempts at serious verse are not

strikingly successful—"The Old Chapel Bell", "The Poet's License", "Time and Love", all the thoughts in these have been much better expressed.

XIII

His own conception of his poetry is thus given in "The Times":

"An honest creature I am bound to say,
Who does her duty in a roguish way;
A laughing jade, of not ungentle mould,
Although, in sooth, she's something apt to
scold,
And, like some worthy people you have
seen,
Who're always talking sharper than they
mean,
A genuine Sphinx as ever poet sung,
With much good-nature and a shrewish
tongue."

This poem was more of a satire than a comedy. For instance he says of the Mexican war:

"A neighboring people rich in landed spoils,
But with ignorance and domestic
broils;

A haughty nation, full of pride for what
Their fathers were, although themselves
are not;

A people fond of pageants and parade,
Replete at once with gas and gasconade,
With all the vapor of the Spanish sire,
Without a flicker of Castilian fire—
A race like this—O tell it not in Gath!—
Excites our avarice and provokes our
wrath,

And so we loose the fiendish dogs of war,
And ply our stripes to gain another star! "

XIV

But such strength as he has is in lighter
armor,—the quick, off-hand play of a nim-
ble wit. This is a specimen of his best
work.

YE PEDAGOGUE

A BALLAD

I

Righte learnéd is ye Pedagogue,
Fulle apt to reade and spelle,
And eke to teache ye parts of speeche,
And strap ye urchins wellle.

II

For as't is meete to soake ye feete,
Ye ailinge heade to mende;
Ye younker's pate to stimulate,
He beats ye other ende!

III

Righte lordlie is ye Pedagogue
As any turbaned Turke;
For welle to rule ye District Schoole,
It is no idle worke.

IV

For oft Rebellion lurketh there
In breaste of secrete foes,
Of malice fulle, in waite to pulle
Ye Pedagogue his nose!

V

Sometimes he heares with trembling feares,
Of ye ungodlie rogue
On mischieffe bent, with felle intent
To licke ye Pedagogue!

VI

And if ye Pedagogue be smalle,
When to ye battell led,

In such a plighte, God sende him mighte
To breake ye rogue his heade!

VII

Daye after daye, for little paye,
He teacheth what he can,
And bears ye yoke, to please ye folke,
And ye Committee-man.

VIII

Ah! many crosses hath he borne,
And many trials founde,
Ye while he trudged ye district through,
And boarded rounde and rounde!

IX

Ah! many a steake hath he devoured,
That, by ye taste and sighte,
Was in disdaine, 't was very plaine,
Of Daye his patent righte!

X

Fulle solemn is ye Pedagogue,
Amonge ye noisy churls,
Yet other while he hath a smile
To give ye handsome girls;

XI

And one,—ye fayrest mayde of all,—

To cheere his wayninge life,

Shall be, when Springe ye flowers shall bringe,

Ye Pedagogue his wife!

Henry David Thoreau



JULY 12

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

I

Who has not felt as he gazed upon the starlit sky, or reached the summit of a mountain, or saw the sun rise over an Adirondack lake, that books and gaslight and conventionality and sometimes even companionship were mistakes, shutting him out from a communion with nature which was higher and better? Of this thought Thoreau was the apostle. He declared that a day passed in the society of those Greek sages, as described in the banquet of Xenophon, would not be comparable with the dry wit of decayed cranberry vines, and the fresh Attic salt of the moss-beds⁵; that in the sunset are all the qualities that can adorn a household, and that sometimes in a flutter-

ing leaf one may hear all Christianity preached⁴.

II

He was born July 12, 1817, in Concord, the only one of the group that made Concord such a noted literary centre who was a native of the village, and of all of them much the most exclusively a resident of Concord. He said he had a real genius for staying at home²; that "cars sound like cares⁴", and that it was not worth while to go round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar⁶.

"Better fifty fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Then fifty years of Europe better one New England ray⁵!"

"What a fool he must be who thinks that his El Dorado is anywhere but where he lives⁴!" he exclaims; and he declares that nothing is to be hoped for you if the bit of mould under your feet is not sweeter than any other in the world³.

"Henry talks about nature," said Margaret Fuller, "just as if she'd been born and brought up in Concord²."

III

He was graduated from Harvard in 1837, without particular distinction, characteristically refusing the diploma because it cost five dollars and was not worth it.

In his sophomore year he had kept a school of 70 pupils at Canton, where he was examined by the Rev. O. A. Brownson, and boarded with him¹; and upon graduation he went to Maine seeking a school there. Being unsuccessful, he took the town school at Concord. Here he announced that he should not flog, but would talk morals as a punishment instead. After a fortnight a knowing deacon, one of the school committee, walked in and told Mr. Thoreau that he must flog and use the ferule, or the school would spoil. So he did, feruling six of his pupils after school, one of whom was the maid-servant in his own house. But it did not suit well with his conscience, and he reported to the committee that he should no longer keep their school¹. In 1843 he was for two months tutor in Mr. Wm. Emerson's family; but he afterward declined the same place in

Horace Greeley's home at Chappaqua. He wrote: "I have thoroughly tried school-keeping, and found that my expenses were out of proportion to my income, for I was obliged to dress and train, not to say think and believe accordingly, and I lost my time into the bargain. As I did not teach for the good of my fellowmen, but simply for a livelihood this was a failure. * * * Probably I should not consciously and deliberately forsake my particular calling to do the good which society demands of me to save the universe from annihilation⁶."

IV

Until 1847 he relied for support principally upon hand labor. Both he and his father were ingenious persons, the latter a pencil-maker. After his father's death he carried on the pencil and plumbago business, and showed the punctuality and prudence which always distinguished him¹. For several years he supplied fine ground plumbago for electrotyping to publishers, among others to the Harpers². He also did occasional surveying.

V

But he worked as little as possible. He says he found he could meet the expenses of living by working six weeks a year⁶; and he thought the seventh day should be man's day of toil,—the other six his Sabbath of the affections and the soul, in which to range this widespread garden, and drink in the soft influences and sublime revelations of Nature². Let not to get a living be thy trade but thy sport⁶. If you would live simply and wisely, life would be not a hardship but a pastime, as the pursuits of simpler nations are still the sports of the more artificial¹⁸. He wrote: "I am as unfit for any practical purpose,—I mean for the furtherance of the world's ends,—as gossamer for ship timber; and I, who am going to be a pencil-maker to-morrow, can sympathise with god Apollo, who served King Ametus for awhile on earth. But I believe he found it for his advantage at last, and I am sure I shall, though I shall hold the nobler part at least out of the service⁴."

This comparison is frequent in his writ-

ings. He never questions that he is a god Apollo.

VI

He was naturally deft in the handling of tools. He boasts : "A man once applied to me to go into a factory, stating conditions and wages, observing that I succeeded in shutting a window of a railroad car in which we were travelling, when the other passengers had failed⁵." In a thunder-storm he sometimes erected a transitory house by means of his pocket-knife, rapidly paring away the white-pine and oak, taking the lower limbs of a large tree and pitching on the cut brush for a roof¹. Wanting to measure a bank, he says : "I borrowed the plane and square, level and dividers, of a carpenter who was shingling a barn near by, and, using one of those shingles made of a mast, contrived a rude sort of quadrant, with pins for sights and pivots, and got the angle of elevation of the Bank opposite the light-house, and with a couple of cod lines the length of its slope, and so measured its height on the shingle⁷."

VII

This deftness was of great advantage to him, combined as it was with the habit of immediate and accurate record. He had gauges for the height of the river, noted the temperature of the springs and ponds, the tints of the morning and evening sky, the flowering and fruit of plants, all the habits of birds and animals, every aspect of nature from the smallest to the greatest².

This gives his writings veracity. When he says that the blueberry on Cape Cod was but an inch or two high⁷, and that an apple tree which had been set ten years, was on an average 18 inches high, and spread 9 feet, with a flat top, and had borne one bushel of apples two years before⁷, we take these figures for facts and not for guesses ; and when he tells of catching a pickerel which has swallowed a brother pickerel half as large as itself, with the tail still visible in its mouth, while the head was already digested in its stomach⁵, we accept it not for a fish-story but for a fact.

VIII

His senses were unusually keen. Alcott

says they seemed double, giving him access to secrets not easily read by others ; in sagacity resembling that of the bee, the dog, the deer ; an instinct for seeing and judging, as by some other, or seventh sense¹⁴. One day walking with a stranger who inquired where Indian arrow-heads could be found he replied "Everywhere", and stooping forward, picked one on the instant from the ground³. He was continually picking them up on Cape Cod.

His hearing was very acute. He says : "At a sufficient distance over the woods this sound [of bells] acquires a certain vibratory hum, as if the pine needles in the horizon were the strings of a harp which it swept⁶." He delighted in echoes, and said they were almost the only kind of kindred voices that he heard³.

He thought the scent a more oracular inquisition than the sight, more oracular and trustworthy, revealing what is concealed from the other senses. By it he detected earthiness³. He says he was frequently notified of the passage of a traveller among

the highway sixty rods off by the scent of his pipe⁶; and he writes: "As I climbed the cliffs, when I jarred the foliage I perceived an exquisite perfume which I could not trace to its source. Ah, those fugacious, universal fragrances of the meadows and woods! odors rightly mingled!"¹¹

IX

Holmes says Thoreau told the story of Nature in undress as only one who had hidden in her bedroom could have told it¹⁷. Thoreau tells of his life at Walden: "There were times when I could not afford to sacrifice the bloom of the present moment to any work, whether of the head or hand. I love a broad margin to my life. Sometimes in a summer morning after taking my accustomed bath I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, wrapped in a reverie, amidst the pines and hickories and sumach, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang round, or flitted noiselessly through the house, until by the sun falling in at my west window, or by some traveller's wagon on a distant highway I was reminded

of the lapse of time. I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands could have been. They were not times subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance. I realized what the Orientals mean by contemplation and the forsaking of works. * * * This was sheer idleness to my fellow-townsmen, no doubt; but if the birds and flowers had tried me by their standard, I should not have been found wanting⁶."

X

Certainly he drank in the true spirit of nature.

Alcott says: "One seldom meets with thoughts like his, coming so scented of mountain and field breezes and rippling spring, so like a luxuriant clod from under forest leaves, moist and mossy with earth spirits. His presence was tonic, like ice-water in dog-days to the parched citizen pent in chambers and under brazen ceilings. Welcome as the gurgle of brooks and dipping of pitchers,—then drink and be cool¹⁴."

Emerson says Thoreau would draw out his diary and read the names of all the plants which should bloom on this day, whereof he kept account as the banker of when his notes fall due. He thought if waked up from a trance in a swamp he could tell by the plants what time of year it was³. Four books have been made from his journals by selecting the extracts for successive years on each date, showing the observations he made; and these have been appropriately named "Spring", "Summer", "Autumn", "Winter".

XI

His observations show how intimately he entered into the life about him. "Every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy⁶," he declares; and again: "Sympathy with the fluttering alder and poplar leaves almost takes away my breath, yet like the lake, my serenity is rippled but not ruffled⁶." He was as thoughtful of the wild forest as an old maid of her garden. "I have watered the red huckleberry," he says, "the sand cherry and the nettle-

tree, the red pine and the black ash, the white grape and the yellow violet, which might have withered else in dry seasons⁶."

Here is an extract: "The sumach (*rhus glabra*) grew luxuriantly about the house, pushing up through the embankment which I had made, and growing five or six feet the first season. Its broad pinnate, tropical leaf was pleasant though strange to look on. The large buds suddenly pushing out late in the spring from dry sticks which had seemed to be dead, developed themselves as if by magic into graceful green and tender boughs, an inch in diameter; and sometimes, as I sat at my window, so heedlessly did they grow and tax their weak joints, I heard a fresh and tender bough suddenly fall like a fan to the ground when there was not a breath of air stirring, broken off by its own weight⁶."

XII

Equally keen and sympathetic was his observation of animals. The twelfth chapter, "Brute Neighbors", is by far the most interesting in "Walden". He speaks of

the bittern carrying its precious legs away to deposit them in a place of safety⁵, and his descriptions of a partridge, and of the battle of the ants, and his frequent pictures of squirrels are extremely felicitious. "For all the motions of the squirrels," he says, "in the most solitary recesses of the forest, imply spectators as much as those of the dancing girl⁶."

Read this account of the owls: "When other birds are still the screech owls take up the strain, like mourning women their ancient *u-lu-lu*. Their dismal scream is truly Ben Jonsonian. Wise midnight hags! It is no honest and blunt *tu-whit tu-who* of the poets, but, without jesting, a most solemn graveyard ditty, the mutual consolations of suicide lovers remembering the pangs and the delights of supernal love in the infernal groves. Yet I love to hear their wailing, their doleful responses, trilled along the woodside; reminding me sometimes of music and singing birds; as if it were the dark and tearful side of music, the regrets and sighs that would fain be sung. They are the spirits, the low spirits and melancholy fore-

bodings, of fallen souls that once in human shape night-walked the earth and did the deeds of darkness, now expiating their sins with their wailing hymns or threnodies in the scenery of their transgressions. They give me a new sense of the variety and capacity of that nature which is our common dwelling. *Oh-o-o-o-o that I had never been bor-r-r-r-n!* sighs one on this side of the pond, and circles with the restlessness of despair to some new perch on the gray oaks. Then—*That I had never been been bor-r-r-r-n!* echoes another on the farther side with tremulous sincerity, and *bor-r-r-r-n!* comes faintly from far in the Lincoln woods⁶.”

XIII

He gained unusual familiarity with animals, and was in this respect the original of Hawthorne's Donatello in “The Marble Faun”. He says, “You only need sit still long enough in some attractive spot in the wood, that all its inhabitants may exhibit themselves to you by turns⁶.” Of a mouse at Walden he tells: “It probably had never seen a man before, but it soon became quite

familiar, and would soon run over my shoes and up my clothes. When at last I held still a piece of cheese between my thumb and finger it came and nibbled it, and afterwards cleaned its face and paws like a fly, and walked away⁶."

Even fish showed little apprehension. "I have often attracted these small perch to the shore at evening by rippling the water with my finger, and they may sometimes be caught by attempting to pass inside your hand⁵." He tells of a pout that he drew from its ova without its making opposition¹¹.

"The breams are so careful of their charge that you may stand close by in the water and examine them at your leisure. I have thus stood over them half an hour at a time, and stroked them familiarly without frightening them, suffering them to nibble my fingers harmlessly, and feel them erect their dorsal fins in anger when my hand approached their ova, and have even taken them gently out of the water with my hand⁵."

He was himself equally ready to accept the advances of living things. "The wasps

came by thousands to my lodge in October as to winter quarters, and settled on my windows and on the walls overhead, sometimes deterring visitors from entering. Each morning when they were numbed with cold I swept some of them out, but I did not trouble myself much to get rid of them. I felt complimented by their regarding my house as a desirable shelter. They never molested me seriously, though they bedded with me⁶⁷

XIV

He was an expert fisherman, and might have been an expert hunter, but this sympathy eventually made such sport distasteful. He said at Walden : " I have found repeatedly of late years that I cannot fish without falling a little in self-respect⁶ ; " and again : " The carcasses of some poor squirrels however, the same that frisked so merrily in the morning, which were skinned and embowelled for our dinner, we abandoned in disgust, with tardy humanity, as too wretched a resource for any but starving men. It was to perpetuate the practice of a barbarous era. If they had been larger, our crime had been

less. Their small red bodies, little bundles of red tissue, mere gobbets of venison, would not have fattened fire. With a sudden impulse we threw them away, and washed our hands, and boiled some rice for our dinner. Behold the difference between him who eateth flesh and him to whom it belonged ! The first hath a momentary enjoyment, whilst the latter is deprived of existence ! Who would commit so great a crime against a poor animal, who is fed only by the herbs which grow wild in the woods, and whose belly is burnt up with hunger⁵ ?”

XV

He prided himself on loving nature for its own sake, as an end, not a means. He says with sarcasm : “ We had the mountain all to ourselves that afternoon and night. There was nobody going up that day to engrave his name on the summit, nor to gather blueberries⁴. ”

He was an honorary member of the Boston society of natural history, and he left them his collection of plants, Indian tools, and the like¹. Early in 1847 he made collections of fishes, turtles, etc. for Agassiz, then newly arrived in America. But he

would not offer the society a memoir of his observations. "Why should I? To detach the description from its connection in my mind would make it no longer true or valuable to me, and they do not wish what belongs to it³." None knew better than he that it is not the fact that imports, but the impression or effect of the fact on your mind³. It was not nature he cared particularly to observe, but the effect of nature upon him¹. He records the minutest feeling or thought that comes to him for fear the world should lose it.

XVI

If this was as Emerson thinks in one way a strength, it was in another a weakness. He was always self-conscious. Friendship was to him only a means of developing himself.

Stevenson says: "Thoreau is dry, priggish, and selfish. It is profit he is after in these intimacies, moral profit certainly, but still profit to himself. 'If you will be the sort of friend I want,' he remarks naively, 'my education cannot dispense with your society⁵.' His education! as though a friend were a dictionary! And with all this not one word about pleasure or laughter or

kisses, or any quality of flesh and blood. It was not inappropriate surely that he had such close relations with the fish. We can understand the friend already quoted when he cried³, 'As for taking his arm, I would as soon think of taking the arm of an elm tree¹⁸'."

He writes to Mrs. Ralph Waldo Emerson : "I like to deal with you for I believe you do not lie or steal, and these are very rare virtues⁴ ;" but how curious a letter he could write appears in one that he wrote to her on June 20, 1843, probably as near a love-letter he ever penned.

Margaret Fuller wrote to him : "The unfolding of affections, a wider and deeper human experience, the harmonizing influences of other natures will mould a man and melt his verse. He will seek thought less,



SARAH MARGARET FULLER, COUNTESS OSSOLI, 1810-1850

and find knowledge the more."

XVII

Naturally a man of Thoreau's convictions cared little for manners. In fact he said the man of manners was an insect in a tumbler¹. "It would indeed be a serious bore to be obliged to touch your hat several times a day. A Yankee has not leisure for it²."

Emerson says: "It cost him nothing to say no; indeed he found it much easier than to say yes³."

Men of note would come to talk with him.

"I don't know," he would say; "perhaps a minute would be enough for both of us."

"But I come to walk with you when you take your exercise."

"Ah, walking—that is my holy time⁴."

He could be as rude to friends as to strangers "who did not know when their visit had terminated⁵". When in Walden his poet friend Ellery Channing comes to call on him he says: "I will go with you gladly soon, but I am just concluding a serious meditation. I think that I am near the end of it. Leave me alone then for a while⁶."

To David Ricketson, a wealthy merchant of New Bedford, who frequently entertained him, and who permitted him to come in his old clothes, he wrote declining an invitation : "*Such are my engagements to myself that I dare not promise to come your way*⁴;" but this was unusually polite. On another occasion he wrote: "I have a faint recollection of your invitation referred to, but I suppose that I had no new or particular reason for declining, and so made no new statement⁴;" and again in a response to a reproach for not having written : "You know I never promised to correspond with you, and so when I do I do more than I promised²."

XVIII

Yet he sometimes made great sacrifices to avoid hurting the feelings of poor people. "The Irishman's wife could not give me fresh water, so shutting my eyes, and excluding the moths by a skilfully directed under-current, I drank to genuine hospitality the heartiest draught I could. I am not squeamish in such cases when manners are concerned⁶."

“When I would go a-visiting,” he says, “I find that I go off the fashionable street to where man meets man, and not polished shoe meets shoe¹¹.” He came to see the inside of every farmer’s house and head, his pot of beans and mug of hard cider. Never in too much hurry for a dish of gossip he could sit out the oldest frequenter of the bar-room, and was alive from top to toe with curiosity². “I love to see the herd of men feeding heartily on coarse and succulent pleasures,” he said, “as cattle on the husks and stalks of vegetables⁵,” and again: “It chanced that the Sunday morning that we were there I had joined a party of men who were smoking and lolling over a pile of boards on one of the wharves, (*nihil humanum a me*, etc.).⁷” Channing says that when Hawthorne and Thoreau laughed, the operation was sufficient to split a pitcher¹. He was sometimes given to music and songs, and now and then in moments of great hilarity would dance gaily, and sing his unique song “Tom Bowline”, which none who heard would ever forget².

XIX

But unless he saw something genuinely original in a companion he preferred to be alone. He would not consent "to feebly fabulate and paddle in the social slush¹⁸."

"I occasionally observed that he was thinking for himself and expressing his own opinions," he says, "a phenomenon so rare that I would any day walk ten miles to observe it⁶;" but again: "I have an immense appetite for solitude, like an infant for sleep, and if I don't get enough of it this year, I shall cry all the next⁴."

Even with those with whom conversation seemed worth while it is a favorite thought of his that the nearer they get together the less they speak.

"Each moment as we nearer drew to each,
A stern respect withheld us farther yet,
So that we seemed beyond each other's
reach,
And less acquainted than when first we
met⁴."

XX

He prided himself upon being an icono-

clast. Holmes called him the nullifier of civilization, who insisted on nibbling his asparagus at the wrong end¹⁷. Emerson says, "Not a particle of respect had he to the opinions of any man or body of men⁸;" and Thoreau declared at thirty that he had yet to hear the first syllable of valuable advice from his seniors⁶.

"If a man does not keep pace with his companion," he says, "perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. * * * The greater part of what my neighbors call good I believe in my soul to be bad, and if I repent of anything it is very likely to be my good behavior⁶." He advises Mr. Blake not to be too moral; he may cheat himself out of much life⁴.

XXI

Naturally his disregard of tradition was most marked with reference to religion. Holmes said of Emerson that he took down our idols from their pedestals so tenderly that it seemed an act of worship¹⁷, but

Thoreau found savage pleasure in defacing them. Thus he declares: "If I could, I would worship the paring of my nails;" and again: "Jehovah, though with us he has acquired new attributes, is more absolute and unapproachable, but hardly more divine, than Jove. He is not so much of a gentleman, not so gracious and catholic, he does not exert so intimate and genial an influence on nature, as many a god of the Greeks⁵."

"The reading which I love best," he says, "is the scriptures of the several nations, though it happens that I am better acquainted with those of the Hindoos, the Chinese and the Persians, than of the Hebrews⁵." Later he makes this distinction: "The New Testament is remarkable for its pure morality, the best Hindoo scripture for its pure intellectuality⁵." Hence as he chose the latter, it is not strange to hear him say: "No greater evil can happen to anyone than to hate reasoning. Man is evidently made for thinking: this is the whole of his dignity, and the whole of his merit. To think as he ought is the whole of his

duty¹;" and again: "The most glorious fact in my experience is not anything that I have done or may hope to do, but a transient thought, or dream, or vision I have had. I would give all the wealth of all the world and all the deeds of all the heroes for one true vision⁵."

XXII

In such a creed good works have no place. "I very rarely indeed, if ever," he says, "feel any itching to be what is called useful to my fellow-men⁴." And again: "If I knew for a certainty that a man was about coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good I should run for my life, as from that dry and parching wind of the African desert called the simoom, which fills the mouth and ears and nose and eyes with dust till you are suffocated, for fear that I should get some of his good done to me,—some of its virus mingled with my blood⁶."

Naturally he despises clergymen, "who speak of God," he says, "as though they enjoyed a monopoly of the subject⁶."

At Montreal he writes: "From time to time we met a priest in the streets, for they are distinguished by their dress, like the civil police. Like clergymen generally, with or without the gown, they made on us the impression of effeminacy. We also met some Sisters of Charity, dressed in black, with Shaker-shaped black bonnets and crosses, and cadaverous faces, who looked as if they had almost cried their eyes out, their complexions parboiled with scalding tears; insulting the daylight by their presence, having taken an oath not to smile⁸."

It seems strange that a man who appreciated flowers so much should get this impression of Sisters of Charity, in whom all the world, christian and pagan, has united in seeing rare attractiveness, and questioned only whether its source was the garb or the self-sacrificing soul speaking through the countenance. We are revenged to find that soon after he thinks he sees the soldiers drilling in white *kid* gloves.

XXIII

But there are glimpses here and there of other things.

"Let no one think," he says, "that I do not love the old ministers, who were probably the best men in their generation, and they deserve that their biographies should fill the pages of the town history. If I could but hear the glad tidings of which they tell, and which, perchance, they heard, I might write in a worthier strain than this⁷."

"As I stand over the insect, crawling over the pine needles on the forest floor, and endeavoring to conceal itself from my sight, and ask myself why it will cherish those humble thoughts, and hide its head from me, who might, perhaps, be its benefactor, and impart to its race some cheering information. I am reminded of the greater Benefactor and Intelligence that stands over me the human insect⁶."

XXIV

His curse here as elsewhere is his self-confidence. Alcott quotes the famous speech of an old Northman as thoroughly characteristic of this Teuton: "I believe in neither idols nor demons; I put my sole trust in my own strength of body and soul¹⁴."

This is an early prayer of Thoreau's:

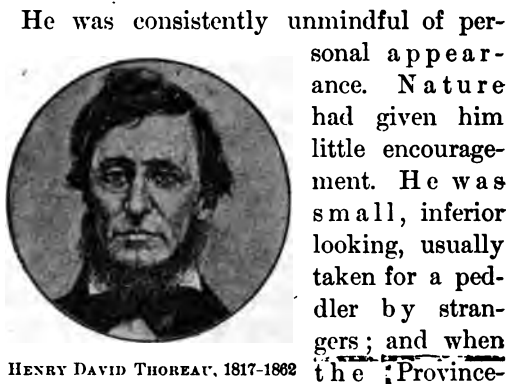
"Great God! I ask Thee for no meaner pelf,
Than that I may not disappoint myself;
That in my conduct I may soar as high
As I can now discern with this clear eye.
That my weak hand may equal my firm
faith,
And my life practise more than my tongue
saith;
That my low conduct may not show,
Nor my relenting lines,
That I Thy purpose did not know,
Or over-rated Thy designs²."

From his own point of view he was consistent. "In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and the future, which is precisely the present moment, to toe that line⁶."

March 31, 1862, he writes: "I suppose that I have not many months to live; but of course I know nothing about it. I may add that I am enjoying existence as much as ever, and regret nothing⁴."

To Parker Pillsbury, who approached him on the subject of religion the winter before his death, he replied gently, "One world at a time¹⁶."

XXV



HENRY DAVID THOREAU, 1817-1862

He was consistently unmindful of personal appearance. Nature had given him little encouragement. He was small, inferior looking, usually taken for a peddler by strangers; and when the Provincetown bank was robbed soon after his first trip to Cape Cod he was suspected of being one of the thieves. Emerson says: "Henry was homely in appearance, a rugged stone hewn from the cliff. I believe it is accorded to all men to be moderately homely; but he surpassed his sex¹⁶."

Channing said: "In height he was about

the average; in his build spare, with limbs that were longer than usual, or of which he made longer use. His features were marked; the nose aquiline or very Roman, like one of the portraits of Cæsar (more like a beak, as was said); large overhanging brows above the deepest-set blue eyes that could be seen,—blue in certain lights and in others gray; the forehead not unusually broad or high, full of concentrated energy and purpose; the mouth with prominent lips, pursed up with meaning and thought when silent, and giving out when open a stream of the most varied and unusual and instructive sayings. His whole figure had an active earnestness, as if he had no moment to waste; the clenched hand betokened purpose. In walking he made a short cut, and when sitting in the shade or by the wall-side, seemed merely the clearer to look forward into the next piece of activity. The intensity of his mind, like Dante's, conveyed the breathing of aloofness,—his eyes bent on the ground, his long swinging gait, his hands perhaps clasped behind him, or

held closely at his side,—the fingers made into a fist².”

XXVI

As for clothes, while he evidently prides himself here and there on the fact of having a new coat, and writes to Mr. Blake that he will come to see him as soon as he gets a new coat if he has money enough left⁴, yet he wonders that people spend so much money on clothes. “While one thick garment is for most purposes as good as three thin ones, and cheap clothing can be obtained at prices really to suit customers; while a thick coat can be bought for five dollars which will last many years, thick pantaloons for two dollars, cow-hide boots for a dollar and a half a pair, a summer hat for a quarter of a dollar, and a winter cap for sixty-two and a half cents, or better be made at home at a nominal cost, where is he so poor that, clad in such a suit of his own earning, there will not be found wise men to do him reverence⁶?”

“Kings and queens. who wear a suit but once, though made by some tailor or dress-maker to their majesties, cannot know the

comfort of wearing a suit that fits. They are no better than wooden horses to hang clean clothes on⁶."

XXVII

On his excursion to Canada he wore a 25-cent unlined straw hat and a linen duster, and prided himself on being the worst dressed man in the party. He writes: "It is not wise for a traveller to go dressed. I should no more think of it than of putting on a clean dicky and blacking my shoes to go a-fishing; as if you were going out to dine, when, in fact, the genuine traveller is going out to work hard, and fare harder,—to eat a crust by the wayside whenever he can get it. Honest travelling is about as dirty work as you can do, and a man needs a pair of overalls for it. As for blacking my shoes in such a case, I should as soon think of blacking my face. I carry a piece of tallow to preserve the leather and keep out the water; that's all; and many an officious shoeblack, who carried off my shoes when I was slumbering, mistaking me for a gentleman, has had occasion to repent it before he produced a gloss on them⁸."

He always carried an umbrella; and as for a valise: "After considerable reflection and experience I have concluded that the best bag for the foot traveller is made with the handkerchief, or *if he study appareances* [!], a piece of stiff brown paper, well tied up, with a fresh piece within to put outside when the first is torn⁸."

At Walden he dug potatoes bare-footed until so late in the day that the sun would blister his feet, and on his walk to Wachusett he and his companion refreshed themselves by bathing their feet in every rill that crossed the road⁹.

XXVIII

In food he was equally original. Emerson says that when asked at table what dish he preferred Thoreau answered, "The nearest." That was probably at Mr. Emerson's house where there was always pie, for he was as fond of that as Mr. Emerson, and added a special fondness for plum cake¹. In Montreal he was much troubled because he could find no pie for sale, and no good cake to put in his box; and the Quebec restau-

rants were disappointing, for when he inquired for pies or puddings he could get only mutton shops, roast beef, beef steak, and cutlets, etc., so he had to buy musty cake and fruit in the open market place⁸.

He often speaks of refraining from meat to keep down his brute nature; and believes that "every man who has ever been earnest to preserve his highest or poetical faculties in the best condition has been particularly inclined to abstain from animal food, or much food of any kind"⁶ "Hasty pudding for the masculine eye, chicken and jellies for the girls¹."

XXIX

Trying to advise a poor laborer struggling with a big family, "I told him", he says, "I did not use tea, nor coffee, nor butter, nor milk, nor fresh meat, and so did not have to work to get them. Again as I did not work hard I did not have to eat hard, and it cost me but a trifle for my food. But if he began with tea and coffee and butter and milk and beef, he had to work hard to pay for them, and when he had worked hard

he had to eat hard again to repair the waste of his system, and so it was as broad as it was long; indeed, it was broader than it was long, for he was discontented and wasted his life into the bargain⁶."

When he goes up Wachusett he makes his supper with blueberries he picks, with milk bought at a farmhouse⁹, and his general advice to travellers is to go afoot, carrying a dipper, a spoon, and a fish-line, some Indian meal, some salt, and some sugar. "When you come to a brook or pond, you can catch fish and cook them; or you can boil a hasty pudding; or you can buy a loaf of bread at a farmer's house for fourpence, moisten it in the next brook that crosses the road, and dip into it your sugar,—this alone will last you a whole day;—or, if you are accustomed to heartier living, you can buy a quart of milk for two cents, crumb your bread or cold pudding into it and eat it with your own spoon out of your own dish⁵."

XXX

He is equally stoical as to bed clothing when travelling. On the top of Saddle

mountain he says: "As it grew colder toward midnight I at length encased myself completely in boards, managing even to put a board on top of me with a large stone on it to keep it down, and so slept comfortably. I was reminded it is true of the Irish children, who inquired what their neighbors did who had no door to put over them in winter nights as they had. But I am convinced there was nothing very strange in the inquiry⁵."

"Mr. Edward Hoar remembers with a shiver to this day the rigor of a night spent on the bare rocks of Mt. Washington with insufficient blankets,—Thoreau sleeping from habit, but himself lying wakeful all the night, and gazing at the coldest of full moons²."

XXXI

He was always prodigal of his health, as he constantly shows in his account of his excursions to the Maine woods. He climbed four pines after hawks' nests, and gathered the brilliant flowers of the white pine from the very top of the tallest pines¹. He was,

moreover, in the habit of abnormally early rising. On his excursions he seems always to be getting up at three o'clock and starting off in a fog long before he could distinguish the very objects he had come to see.

The consequence of this under-feeding and over-working was that with all his inherited strength of constitution he was almost never well. He certainly was not a man to complain, and yet his letters and journals are full of such statements as these: "I must still reckon myself with the innumerable army of invalids, though I am tougher than formerly⁴;" "I do not see how strength is to be got into my legs again⁴;" "What I got by going to Canada was a cold⁸;" "There is danger that the cold weather may come again before I get over my bronchitis⁴."

Finally his lungs became so severely affected that he went to Minnesota with young Horace Mann in hope of recovery; but returned little benefited, and died May 6, 1862.

XXXII

Up to 1847, as we have said, he supported himself mainly by labor of his hands. By

that time he began to be somewhat known as a writer and lecturer. At Concord, the headquarters of the lecture movement, he gave his first lecture in 1838, and afterwards lectured there nearly every year for twenty years². While Hawthorne was surveyor at Salem he invited Thoreau to come there to lecture, telling him that the fee was \$20².

But his lectures were less in demand than those of his fellow-townsmen. In 1852 he offered to lecture in New York, but Greeley replied that the course was full for the season, and even if it were not his name would probably not pass². In 1856, he writes: "I have not heard from Harrisburg since offering to go there, and have not been invited to lecture anywhere else in the meantime⁴;" and again: "Perhaps it always costs me more than it comes to to lecture before a promiscuous audience. It is an irreparable injury done to my modesty even, —I became so indurated. O solitude! obscurity! meanness! I never triumph so as when I have the least success in my neighbor's eyes. The lecturer gets fifty dollars a night; but what becomes of his winter?

What consolation will it be hereafter to have fifty thousand dollars for living in the world? I should not like to exchange *any* of my life for money⁴."

XXXIII

His first writing of consequence appeared



HORACE GREELEY, 1811-1872

in the *Dial*, where several of his pieces were published. Horace Greeley became interested in him, and secured the publication of several of his articles, among them that

on Carlyle in Graham's magazine for 1857. While Bayard Taylor was editor of the *Union* magazine, Greeley brought him a roll of manuscript saying: "You must do something for this young man. His name is Thoreau. He lives in a shanty on Walden Pond, near Concord, on \$37.21 a year. He must be encouraged." The manuscript was "Ktaadn and the Maine Woods". Taylor

persuaded the publisher to give \$75 for it, and it was published in 1848; but it contained so many misprints that Thoreau became indignant²⁰. In 1852 Sartain offered him \$3 a page for what he might write for the magazine, and in April Greeley offered him \$50 for an article on Emerson, in advance if he desired².

"The Yankee in Canada," an account of a ten-day excursion on which his total expenses were \$11.62½⁸, began in Putnam's magazine in September, 1853; followed in 1855 by the paper on "Cape Cod", which became the subject of controversy, first as to price and then as to its tone toward the people of that region. The editor wanted to make some changes, which Thoreau refused, and the articles came abruptly to an end. When Lowell left out this sentence from one of his pieces about the pine tree, "It is as immortal as I am, perchance will go to as high a heaven, there to tower above me still," Thoreau having given no authority considered the bounds of right were passed, and would write no more for the Atlantic.

XXXIV

His first book (1849) was "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers". It was published at his own expense, and as the sale was small it brought a heavy burden of debt upon him.

In 1853 Thoreau records that for a year or two past his publisher, falsely so called, has been writing from time to time to ask what disposition should be made of the copies still on hand, at last suggesting that he had use for the room they occupied in his cellar. "So I have had them all sent to me here, and they have arrived to-day by express, filling the man's wagon, 706 copies out of an edition of 1000, which I bought of Monroe four years ago, and have been ever since paying for, and have not quite paid for yet. * * * Of the remaining 290 and odd, 75 were given away, the rest sold. I have now a library of nearly 900 volumes, over 700 of which I wrote myself⁵."

XXXV

The wonder is that the book sold at all. It is an account of a week's journey on two

quiet New England rivers, in a boat that two young men had made, and in which they met with no adventure. It would seem hard to make out of this excursion, ten years afterwards, a book of 518 pages, but as a matter of fact the book is not made out of the excursion, which is only an excuse for it. Besides the poems and the local history, and the quotations from the *Gazetteer*, and the thoughts which the journey itself suggested, it gathers apparently everything that Thoreau had ever thought out on any subject. Here are 5 pages about gardening, 4 about mythology, 21 about religion, 25 about books and reading, 25 more about reformers and the scriptures, 15 about the Indian scriptures and history, 14 about a trip up Saddle mountain, 7 about Anacreon and 7 more about Persius with translations, 40 about friendship, 9 about Goethe, 11 about Ossian, 32 about Chaucer, with a multitude of others; so that of the 518 pages hardly half has any more relation to this particular trip than to his hoeing beans at Walden.

Lowell well says: "Mr. Thoreau becomes

so absorbed in these discussions that he seems as it were to catch a crab, and disappear uncomfortably from his seat at the bow oar. We could forgive them all, * * * we could welcome them all were they put by themselves at the end of the book; but as it is they are out of proportion and out of place, and mar our Merrimacking dreadfully. We were invited to a river party, and not to be preached at¹⁹."

XXXVI

His next book, "Walden, or Life in the Woods" (1854), was more successful, and is the one by which he is best known. It is the account of an experiment he made to prove that "a man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone⁶." He occupied land owned by Mr. Emerson, on Walden pond, borrowed an axe of Mr. Alcott, bought an Irishman's shanty for \$4.25 and moved the timber, spent two hours digging the cellar, got his friends to help him to raise the frame, and completed the cabin at a total cost of \$28.12½, though it was 10 feet wide, 15 feet long, with a garret and a closet, a large window on each side,

two trap doors, a door at the end, and a brick fireplace opposite. There was no other house in sight, and his nearest neighbor was a mile distant. He never fastened his door night or day, even when he spent a fortnight in Maine.

XXXVII

To support himself he planted seven miles of beans, “making the yellow soil express its summer thought in bean leaves and blossoms rather than in wormwood and piper and millet grass⁶”. He used to hoe from five o’clock in the morning until noon, then swim, dress, and go to the village, or write, his principal work being to edit his “Week⁵.”

The expense of his food for eight months was \$8.74⁶ and his entire expenses \$61.99 $\frac{3}{4}$, while he got for farm produce \$23.40, and earned by day labor \$13.34, leaving a balance of \$25.21 $\frac{1}{4}$, or about what he started with. His food alone cost him in money 27 cents a week. It was for nearly two years after this rye and Indian meal without meat, potatoes, rice, a very little salt pork, molas-

ses and salt, with water for drink. At one time, owing to lack of money, he had no bread at all for a month. He found yeast not an essential ingredient, and thought it simpler and more respectable to omit it; he even questioned the utility of salt: "If I did without it altogether I should probably drink less water. I do not learn that the Indians ever troubled themselves to go after it⁶."

XXXVIII

He staid from July 4, 1845 to Sept. 6, 1847. He says: "I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more for that one⁶."

As a protest against extravagant living this is the bold statement he makes: "I have no doubt that some of you who read this book are unable to pay for all the dinners which you have actually eaten, or for the coats and shoes which are past wearing, or are already worn out, and have come to this page to spend borrowed or stolen time, robbing your creditors of an hour⁶."

He continually asserts that property, especially real estate, is a needless incumbrance. When a young man inherits a farm he wonders why he should eat 60 acres of dirt, when man is condemned to eat only a peck. He says: "How many a poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn 75 feet by 40, its Augean stables never cleansed, and 100 acres of land, mowing, tillage, pasture and woodlot." It is not the farmer that has got the house, but the house that has got him. It makes but little difference whether you are committed to a farm or the county jail. He thinks it absurd that Harvard students have to pay as much for the rent of a single room as his house costs him, not remembering that there is no land in Cambridge to be squatted upon.

There was nothing remarkably abstemious about his house at Walden. The writer of this article lived for two winters in houses he built for himself simply by digging out a rectangle of dirt 6 feet by 2 and 8 inches deep, piling it on an adjoining rectangle 6

feet by 2, divided from the first by a log so as to form a raised bed, putting over all a piece of cotton cloth, covering up the ends with logs plastered with mud, and making a chimney also of logs. To privates in the Union army such a house as Thoreau lived in at Walden would have seemed a palace, yet we were not seriously uncomfortable.

XXXIX

His narrative and descriptive style is certainly admirable. He says: "What I was learning in college was chiefly how to express myself, and I see now as the old orator prescribed first action, second action, third action, my teacher should have prescribed to me, first sincerity, second sincerity, third sincerity⁴."

He says again: "A true account of the actual is the rarest poetry, for common-sense always takes a hasty and superficial view. Though I am not much acquainted with the works of Goethe, I should say that it was one of his chief excellencies as a writer, that he was satisfied with giving an exact description of things as they appeared to him, and their effect upon him⁵." * * *

“As for style of writing, if one has anything to say it drops from him simply and directly, as a stone falls to the ground. There are no two ways about it, but down it comes, and he may stick in the points and stops whenever he can get a chance. New ideas come into this world somewhat like fallen meteors, with a flash and an explosion, and perhaps somebody’s castle-roof perforated. To try to polish the stone in its descent, to give it a peculiar turn, and make it whistle a tune, perchance, would be of no use, if it were possible. Your polished stuff turns out to be not meteoric, but of this earth⁴. ”

XL

On the other hand he writes to a friend: “Let me suggest a theme for you: to state to yourself precisely and completely what that walk over the mountains amounted to for you,—returning to this essay again and again, until you are satisfied that all that was important in your experience is in it. Give this good reason to yourself for having gone over the mountains, for mankind is

ever going over a mountain. Don't suppose you can tell it precisely the first dozen times you try, but at 'em again, especially when, after a sufficient pause, you suspect that you are touching the heart or summit of the matter, reiterate your blows there, and account for the mountain to yourself. Not that the story need be long, but it will take a long time to make it short⁴."

Alcott declares of his prose, that in substance and pith it surpasses that of any naturalist of his time¹⁴. Much of it is surpassed by few writers of his time, whatever their subject. He has himself expressed his aim: "Their sentences are not concentrated and nutty, --sentences which suggest far more than they say, which have an atmosphere about them, which do not report an old, but make a new impression; sentences which suggest many things, and are as durable as a Roman aqueduct, to frame these,—that is the *art* of writing¹." .

XLI

Here are some of his sentences:

"Time cannot bend the line which God has writ⁴."

"What exercise is to the body employment is to the mind and morals⁴."

"How can we expect a harvest of thoughts who have not had a seed-time of character⁵?"

"Some circumstantial evidence is strong, as when you find a trout in the milk."

"The youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon, or, perchance, a palace or temple on the earth, and at length the middle-aged man concludes to build a wood-shed with them."

Of a Cape Cod fisherman he said: "He looked as if he sometimes saw a doughnut, but never descended to comfort. Too grave to laugh, too tough to cry; as indifferent as a clam; like a sea-clam with hat on and legs, that was out walking the strand⁷."

He speaks of the powdered snow, where not a rabbit's track, nor even a fine print, the small type of a meadow mouse, was to be seen⁶.

XLII

His greatest weakness was what he probably considered his greatest strength, the habit of glancing off from the fact to moralizing, already instanced in "A Week".

Of another fault Emerson says: "The habit of a realist to find things the reverse of their appearance inclined him to put every statement in a paradox. A certain habit of antagonism defaced his earlier writings, a trick of rhetoric not quite outgrown in his later, of substituting for the obvious word or thought its diametrical oposite. He praised wild mountains and winter forests for their domestic air; in snow and ice he would find sultriness; and commended the wilderness for resembling Rome and Paris; it was so dry that you might call it wet³." Thoreau says: "I have heard of a dog that barked at every stranger who approached his master's premises with clothes on, but was easily quieted by a naked thief⁶." It might be inquired in what part of the year naked thieves were common in New England.

XLIII

Theoretically he disapproves of humor, and cut out many of his humorous passages¹⁸, though much genuine humor remains. He says of Chaucer's poetry: "For picturesque description of persons it is per-

haps without a parallel in English poetry; yet it is essentially humorous, as the loftiest genius never is. Humor, however broad and genial, takes a narrower view than enthusiasm⁵."

But he has a marked weakness for puns, such as:

"Even the elephant carries but a small trunk on his journey⁸."

"Next came the fort of George's Island. These are bungling contrivances, not our *fortes*, but our *foibles*⁷."

"It was literally, or *litorally*, walking down to the shore⁷."

"The more tired the wheels, the less tired the horses⁷."

"A government lighting its mariners on a wintry coast with summer-strained oil to save expense. That were surely a summer-strained mercy⁷." This is strained if the quality of mercy is not.

"As I walked on the glacis I heard the sound of a bagpipe from the soldier's dwelling in the rock, and was further soothed and affected by the sight of a soldier's cat walk-

ing up a cleeted plank into a high loop-hole, designed for *mus-catry*⁸."

"Thaw, with his gentle persuasion, is more powerful than Thor with his hammer⁶."

"But whether Thor-finn saw the mirage here or not, Thor-eau, one of the same family, did; and perchance it was because Lief the Lucky had, in a previous voyage, taken Thor-er and his people off the rock in the middle of the sea, that Thor-eau was born to see it⁷."

XLIV

There is often conscious effort for the snap he speaks of.

"You might make a curious list of articles which fishes have swallowed; sailors' open-clasped knives, bright tin snuff-boxes, not knowing what was in them, and jugs, and jewels, and Jonah⁷."

"This hotel was kept by a tailor, his shop on one side of the door, his hotel on the other; and his day seemed to be divided between carving meat and carving broadcloth⁷." How much broadcloth he would

have to carve for Cape Cod fishermen is not stated.

He shows his study of words when he says of the French: "Their very *rivière* meanders more than our river⁸.

Not much need be said of his poetry. Emerson speaks charitably: "His own verses are often rude and defective; the gold does not yet run pure, it is drossy and crude: the thyme and marjoram are not yet honey⁸."

XLV

As one studies the life and writings of Thoreau the conviction grows that much of what he calls sincerity was a morbid desire to be different from other people. It was his habit when he climbed or descended a mountain to disregard the beaten paths and go straight by the compass for the point aimed at, clambering up cliffs and wading through swamps rather than follow in the footsteps of others. His persistent determination enabled him to get there, but his way was not the easiest or the wisest. When he prefers the Veda to the Bible, he is odd, but he

shows a lack of literary taste. When he declares that he would rather trust himself to the Greek divinities than to Jehovah he is audacious, but he shows a warped judgment. When he builds up a theory of friendship and of love, based on intellectual estimate and excluding the affections, he is singular, but he deprives himself of the most needed help his kind can give. When he does the work of a porter on the diet of a hermit, he flies in the face of tradition, but he breaks down his constitution, and reaps a premature death at forty-five.

XLVI

It is not necessarily a proof of wisdom to consider the rest of mankind fools. "I haven't credulity to believe in religion," said a flippant young man to his teacher. But his sage instructor replied, "Does it not take more credulity to believe that most of the best and wisest men who have ever lived have been wrong?" It is not necessarily true that whatever is is right, but whatever is has the presumption of being right, and should not be disturbed until one is quite sure he has something better to propose.

The superficialness of Thoreau's attitude toward the world is shown by his abundant inconsistencies. He boasted that his first book was hypaethral, like Egyptian temples, open to the heavens, and might have been written wholly out of doors; yet it contains three hundred quotations from a hundred different authors. He rails against newspapers, saying, "Blessed are they who never read them for they shall see nature;" and yet he reads even to the advertisements the scraps in which his lunches are wrapped.

XLVII

He lived for a time in Emerson's family, and unconsciously grew to imitate Emerson's tone and manner till Lowell declared that with his eyes shut he could not tell which was talking. But he never imitated the sweetness of Emerson's character. When he was imprisoned for refusing to pay a poll-tax to a State that sanctioned slavery, Emerson came to him and asked, "Henry, why are you here?" to which Thoreau replied, "Why are you not here?" But the reproach was unmerited. When a friend paid the tax for him, Thoreau

accepted his release; Emerson would have died in that Concord jail had it been with him a matter of principle. But while Emerson never yielded where conscience forbade, he never made an issue with society unless conscience compelled.

Thoreau's contribution to mankind is great not because of his oddity but in spite of it, and except for it would have been much greater. As Emerson says, "Instead of engineering for all America, he was the captain of a huckleberry party³."

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Elizabeth Stuart Phelps-Ward

AUGUST .13

Eliz. Stuart Phelps-Ward

I

Of the score of authors thus far treated,



ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS-WARD,
1844-

Mrs. Ward is the first who has written an autobiography. Her "Chapters from a Life" is an excellent autobiography, the veracious story of a strong, pure, cultured, high-

minded woman of characteristic New England type.

"I was taught," she says, "that I should speak the truth, say my prayers, and con-

sider other people. It was a wholesome, right-minded, invigorating training that we had, born of tenderness, educated conscience, and good sense, and I have lived to bless it in many troubled years¹."

II

No better descriptions of Andover life have been written than are given us by this keen-eyed professor's daughter. She was born in 1844 in the thickest of the theological group. Her father was the professor of rhetoric, her maternal grandfather was the professor of sacred literature, and her mother was the author of "The Peep at Number Five," and of "Sunnyside" that sold to 100,000 copies. In some of her stories she pokes a good deal of fun at the social functions provided for the theologues, but she thoroughly respects the Andover life, and makes us respect it.

It gave her "an everlasting scorn of worldliness,—I do not mean in the religious sense of the word,—that tendency to seek the lower motives, to do the secondary thing, to confuse sound or appearances with values, for which I know no other term than under-

bred.” Of the playmates she grew up among she says: “Some of these private records of girl history were so white, so clear, so sweet, that to read them would be like watching a morning-glory open¹.”

III

Her ambition showed itself early, for she tells of coasting (standing up) on what she was proud to claim as the biggest sled in town, down the longest hills, and on the fastest local record. She was an out-of-door girl, always into every little mischief of snow or rainfall, flower, field, or woods or ice. But in spite of sleds and skates and tramps, and all the west winds from Wachusett that blew through her, both soul and body, she was not strong. Her father found it necessary to oversee her methods of study. Well he might, for with the exception of Greek and trigonometry, thought in those days to be beyond the scope of the feminine intellect, she pursued the same curriculum that her brothers did at college.

IV

Another residence of hers is impressed on

all her books. "The story came out of the depths of the sea," she says of "A Singular Life", "and of a heart that has long loved the sea-people¹." For years she lived from May to November on the seashore at Gloucester, in a chalet known as "The Old Maid's Paradise". "Tragic Gloucester," a friend once called it, who resented the effect upon her of the troubled side of seaport life, and in 1888 the chalet was closed forever, when she went to Summerville, S. C., and there met the man who became her husband. Her present home is at Newton Centre.

V

Her career as an author began early. When she was 13 she sent a contribution to the *Youth's Companion*, which was printed and was paid for by a year's subscription. Then for an article in a young folks' religious paper she received \$2.50. But she was 19 when "A Sacrifice Consumed" appeared in *Harper's Magazine*. She received \$25 for it, and she says: "It occurred to me, with a throb of pleasure greater than I supposed then that life could hold, that I could

take care of myself, and from that day to this I have done so¹."

She became well-known as a writer of short stories, which appeared oftenest in Harper's, but also in the *Atlantic*, the *Century*, and the denominational papers.

"A good short story," she says, "is a work which daunts us in proportion to its brevity." And again: "It has always taken me at least from a month to six weeks to finish a magazine story. I recast, remodel, retouch, destroy the whole thing a dozen times in my mind, and recreate it. No proof leaves the study without at least three revisions."

She names as her stories for which she has a special preference: "The Madonna of the Tubs", "Jack the Fisherman", "The Supply at Saint Agatha's", and "The Bell of Saint Basil's".

VI

One cannot live by bread or magazine stories alone, as the young daughter of toil too soon found out. "Like other writers," she says, "I did hack work. Of making

Sunday-school books I scarcely found an end. I must have written over a dozen of them; I wince, sometimes, when I see their forgotten dates and titles in encyclopædias; but a better judgment tells me that one should not be ashamed of doing hard work honestly. * * *

"Sunday-school writers did books by sets in those days; perhaps they do still. And at least two such sets I provided to order, each of four volumes. Both of these, it so happens, have survived their day and generation—the Tiny books, we called them, and the Gypsy books. I received for them \$100 apiece, for the Gypsy books \$150."

VII

Her pride, her determination, and her energy are all illustrated here. "One of them came back to me; it happened to be the only book I ever wrote that did—and when the Andover expressman brought in the square package just before tea, I felt my heart stand still with mortification. At the earliest moment possible I got myself into my little room, and turned both keys upon

myself and my rejected manuscript. But when I came to read the publisher's letter, I learned that hope still remained, a flickering torch, upon a darkened universe. That excellent man did not refuse the story, but raised objections to certain points of forms therein, to which he summoned my attention. The criticism called substantially for the rewriting of the book. I lighted my lamp, and, with the June beetles butting at my head, I wrote all night. At three o'clock in the morning I put the last sentence to the remodelled story—the whole was a matter of some 350 pages of manuscript—and crawled to bed. At six I stole out and found the expressman, that innocent and ignorant messenger of joy or woe. The revised manuscript reached the publisher by ten o'clock, and his letter of unconditional acceptance was in my hands before another tea-time."

VIII

Fame lit upon her suddenly. Before she was 21 she wrote "*The Gates Ajar*", and it was published when she was 24. Not many weeks after its publication she received a let-

ter from her publisher telling her the book had reached a sale of 4,000 copies, and enclosing a check for \$600. Its sale in America reached 80,000 copies, and a six-penny edition in England reached higher figures. It was translated into French, German, Dutch, and Italian. There was a Gates Ajar tippet for sale in the country groceries. There was a Gates Ajar collar; even a Gates Ajar cigar.

Mindful of her Sunday-school books she expanded it into a series. "Beyond the Gates" reached 30,000 copies, and "The Gates Between" sold largely. The series still has more readers than all her other books combined.

IX

"The Gates Ajar" did not owe its success to literary merit. As a story it is weak. The dialogues between Mary and Aunt Winifred are only monologue chopped into slices. But it dealt with the mysterious hereafter, with friends who have gone on before, and taught that their disembodied spirits hover about us and commune with us. Aunt Winifred says:

“‘I have been talking it over with them all the afternoon; it seems to be what they want.’

“‘With *them*’? I started at the words; who had been in her lonely chamber? Ah, it is simply real to her. Who, indeed, but her Saviour and her husband?’”

When Aunt Winifred dies, she simply turns to the window and sees her husband.

“‘John!’ she said,—“‘why, John!’”

There are to be mountains and trees in heaven, and day-lilies and carnations, and houses and books and pictures and pianos, and potato-fields and machinery and babies and white guinea-pigs. In short heaven is to contain everything we have liked here and want to find there, instead of being where you “just floated around—you know—all together—something like ju-jube paste!”

X

That such a book should be written by a woman brought up under Prof. Park’s theology was an amazement to all and a grief to many. But she is reverent in the midst

of her iconoclasm, and if her view of heaven is heathenish, it found heathenism to sympathise with it in a good many bereaved hearts. She says herself:

“The Gates Ajar grew so naturally, it was so inevitable, it was so unpremeditated, it came so plainly from that something not one’s self which makes for uses in which one’s self is extinguished, that there are times when it seems to me as if I had no more to do with the writing of it than the bough through which the wind cries, or the wave by means of which the tide rises. The angel said unto me ‘Write!’ and I wrote!”

XI

Of her other books her own favorite is “The Story of Avis”. It came from near her heart, she says, and tore it accordingly. Again she says it is a woman’s book, hoping for small hospitality from the hands of men, and an author would care for it in proportion as she cared for her own sex. As George Sand’s *Elle et Lui* was followed by *Lui et Elle* at the hands of a friend of

de Musset, so had he not been such a pitiful apology for a man one might have liked to hear how Avis would be described in "The Story of Philip". Avis was an artist, "affected by color as the more sensitive musical temperament is by sound", and as fond of "Aurora Leigh" as Mrs. Ward herself. When her baby was born she didn't care a bit for it, though of course she learned to; but it seemed the great triumph of her life that she could love her husband just as God made him. As for him, he had a beard that had never known a razor, and failed as a professor from lack of steady purpose. The tragedy of the story came from his flirtation with Barbara Allen,—an amplification of "No News", one of the stories in "Men, Women, and Ghosts"; and it was perhaps the more of a tragedy because the woman who had ceased to respect her husband grew to be glad she loved him without respecting him.

XII

Her favorite hero is Bayard, in "A Singular Life". He is the type of a

man found only in the novels of women and of Richard Harding Davis. The son of a man who married while a hopeless consumptive, and himself weak in the lungs, he was nevertheless stroke of the Harvard crew, and pauses on his way to his ordination to fell a prize-fighter by a single blow. "In Paris, once, he was thrown in the way of an adventuress, and she confessed to him, sobbing, as if he had been her priest, within an hour."

Much more satisfactory to men as an ideal is Charles Nordhall, of "Friends: a Duett", a thoroughly manly man, who essays the difficult role of platonic affection for the widow of a friend, finally marrying her when at last he rebels against her unreasonableness and she finds she must yield to him or lose him.

XIII

She has written a good many other books, among them two in which her collaboration with Herbert D. Ward led to an acquaintance that resulted in their marriage. Her last work is "The Story of Jesus Christ".

"It is not," she says, "theology, or criticism, nor is it biography. It is neither history, controversy, or a sermon." But it is founded on her belief in the Incarnation. The Critic says: "Her Christ is a Christ of the senses as 'The Gates Ajar' was a heaven of the senses. * * * Yet, with all its color and concreteness, the story never, for a moment, becomes real."

With all her merits as a writer, this is her omnipresent defect. None of her stories become real. They never tell themselves. Always there is consciously present the narrator, the rigid New England woman, seeking less to depict reality than to point a moral. Turn from "Men, Women, and Ghosts", a collection of her shorter stories, to Cable's "Old Creole Days", and this distinction will be painfully apparent. Mr. Cable is an artist; Mrs. Ward draws diagrams upon a Sunday-school blackboard.

XIV

She had some experience as a reformer. While she was in Gloucester she saw the inside of a drunkard's home, and for three

years she worked with all her soul for temperance reform, even speaking in public, for her a particularly difficult labor. It broke down her health so that she has never recovered, suffering for years from the torture of insomnia. So she was obliged to give up active participation in reform work, though she has not hesitated to use her pen when the spirit moved: as when last April she published in the *New York Herald* a protest against the Cuban war. She says: "My interest in moral reforms has never to my consciousness encroached upon my power—such as that has been—to write; or upon those habits of study which are the key to the combination lock of all successful writing¹." But her experiences at Gloucester are the basis of "*A Singular Life*"; and even in "*Two Friends*" the reformed drunkard is won back for a night by drugged tea, and the man who tries to take him home is nearly murdered. Such things have happened, but they are not as much a matter of course in real life as in her books. She says:

"If I am reminded how many of my

stories have been written with an ethical purpose, that is quite another accusation, and one which I have not from any point of view, the wraith of a wish to deny." And again: "Fear less to seem 'Puritan' than to be inadequate. Fear more to be superficial than to seem 'deep'. Fear less to 'point your moral' than to miss your opportunity."

Unfortunately when the story is told for the sake of the moral the opportunity is missed, for it is no longer narration. "You must let me kill you," the man said to the lion, "for in all pictures this is what happens."—"But suppose the pictures had been painted by lions," the beast suggested; and he went on with his meal.

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Francis Parkman

SEPTEMBER 16

FRANCIS PARKMAN

I

It is an old story that if the task of describing a hippopotamus were given to an Englishman, a Frenchman, and a German, the Englishman would take down his gun, sail for Africa, shoot one, examine it, and write his report sitting beside it; the Frenchman would ransack the libraries for everything that has ever been written about the hippopotamus, and compile a description from that; while the German would lock his door, light his pipe, and evolve it out of his inner consciousness.

Francis Parkman wrote history on the English plan. To be sure that his knowledge of the Indians was accurate he lived among them, and he made it a habit to visit

personally the scenes about which he wrote. Justin Winsor says:

"I recollect he once said to me that he had never ceased to regret that he had written that portion of his 'Pioneers' which covers the conflict of Spaniard and Huguenot on our Southern coast without first having visited the sites of the action of the story, so that he could write of the topography and surrounding nature with personal knowledge. I happened to see him at a later day when he had the revision of that volume in hand, and he was to start on the morrow for a southern tour. He seemed to feel like a man who had made up his mind to undo an injustice. He had a feeling that his fame was at stake if this journey of apology were not made¹⁵."

II

Few lives have been so devoted as his to a single purpose.

He was born in Boston, Sept. 16, 1823. His home in childhood was near the forest of the Middlesex fell, Massachusetts, and his wanderings and shootings in those woods

early developed the two leading interests of his youth, the woods and the Indians. When his literary taste and ambition were aroused in Harvard, he chose as his topic the French and Indian or Seven Years War, because it dealt with these favorite subjects, and moreover appealed to his strong sense of the picturesque. The die was thus cast, and thereafter through college, through the law school, indeed through life, it moulded his existence. For some years his reading, study, and vacation journeys all had a bearing on this particular subject¹⁰.

III

On April 28, 1846, he started with his relative, Quincy Adams Shaw, on a tour of curiosity and amusement to the Rocky mountains, his adventures being narrated in "The Oregon Trail". He followed along the Platte river to Laramie, and near there joined the Ogallalla Sioux, and lived and travelled with them for a time. Returning he struck south to Pueblo, and then came east along the Arkansas. It would have

been a trying trip for a well man; but he took most of it as an invalid, and received injuries from which he never recovered.

IV

He defied the annals of chivalry to furnish a life more wild and perilous than that of a Rocky mountain traveller. While he lay awake at night listening to the howling of the wolves, snakes would quietly visit him in his tent, and for much of the journey he knew that if he was seen by any of the straggling tribes of Indians his life would be forfeited. "But a prairie is unfavorable to nervousness," he says, and he seldom thought twice of the matter. Sometimes he lost sight of the trail, and had to follow it by broken ant-hills and the bruised leaves of the prickly pear. Of one occasion he says:

"Pauline strained upward for a few yards, moaning and stumbling and then came to a dead stop, unable to proceed further. I dismounted and attempted to lead her, but my own exhausted strength soon gave out; so I loosened the trail-rope from her neck, and

tying it round my arm crawled up on my hands and knees. I gained the top totally spent, sweat-drops trickling from my forehead. Pauline stood like a statue by my side, her shadow falling upon the scorching rock, and in this shade, for there was no other, I lay for some time, scarcely able to move a limb. All around the black crags, sharp as needles at the top, stood baking in the sun, without tree, or bush, or blade of grass to cover their nakedness. The whole scene seemed parched with a piteous insufferable heat¹."

V

But there was sport, as well as danger. It was a time when the buffaloes were innumerable. He could never resist the temptation of the chase, even when they had no use for the meat or the horns and could only bring back the tail by way of trophy. Indeed it must be confessed that he was often merciless. His game little marc, Pauline, he never spared from any exhaustion to which he could stimulate her by a whip of knotted bull-hide. When a

dying antelope turned her expiring eye upward, like a beautiful woman's, dark and bright, he rejoiced to be in too much hurry to have time for remorse. He complained that the buffaloes were often so stupid and lethargic that there was little sport in killing them, and said the English tourist was wrong in representing the turning of the tables when the buffalo chased the horse as dangerous. The bull never pursued long, and the horse must be wretched indeed that cannot keep out of his way for two or three minutes.

VI

Here is one of many stories of these encounters.

"I soon began to distinguish cows amid the throng. One just in front of me seemed to my liking, and I pushed close to her side. Dropping the reins I fired, holding the muzzle of the gun close to her shoulder. Quick as lightning she sprang at Pauline; the little mare dodged the attack, and I lost sight of the wounded animal amid the tumult. Immediately after, I selected another, and

urging forward Pauline, shot into her both pistols in succession. For a while I kept her in view, but in attempting to load my gun, lost sight of her also in the confusion. Believing her to be mortally wounded and unable to keep up with the herd I checked my horse. The crowd rushed onwards. The dust and tumult passed away, and on the prairie, far behind the rest, I saw a solitary buffalo galloping heavily. In a moment I and my victim were running side by side. My firearms were all empty, and I had in my pouch nothing but rifle bullets, too large for the pistols and too small for the gun. I loaded the gun, however, but as often as I levelled it to fire, the bullets would roll out of the muzzle and the gun returned only a report like a squib, as the powder harmlessly exploded. I rode in front of the buffalo, and tried to turn her back; but her eyes glared, her mane bristled, and, lowering her head, she rushed at me with the utmost fierceness and activity. Again and again I rode before her, and again and again she repeated her furious charge. But little Pauline was in her element. She dodged her

enemy at every rush, until at length the buffalo stood still, exhausted with her own efforts, her tongue lolling from her jaws.

“Riding to a little distance, I dismounted, thinking to gather a handful of dry grass to serve the purpose of wadding, and load the gun at my leisure. No sooner were my feet on the ground than the buffalo came bounding in such a rage towards me that I jumped back again into the saddle with all possible dispatch. After waiting a few minutes more, I made an attempt to ride up and stab her with my knife; but Pauline was near being gored in the attempt. At length, bethinking me of the fringes at the seams of my buckskin trousers, I jerked off a few of them, and, reloading the gun, forced them down the barrel to keep the bullet in its place; then approaching, I shot the wounded buffalo through the heart. Sinking to her knees she rolled over lifeless on the prairie. To my astonishment I found that, instead of a cow, I had been slaughtering a stout yearling bull.”

VII

He shares with Cooper the honor of fixing

in literature the picture of the American Indian. He speaks with sarcasm of Cooper's Indians. To make the Indian a hero of romance is mere nonsense, he says⁴. The Indian is foul, greasy, unsavory⁴, shamelessly licentious, a liar, a beggar, and a thief². He would make presents, but only because he expected presents of superior value in return, and if the return present was not received the original present was usually reclaimed. An Indian would be baptized ten times a day for a pint of brandy or a pound of tobacco². He would camp in the neighborhood of the white men and at meal-time sit by the traveller's fire and watch the cooking. If when the meal was over a fragment of bread or a cup of coffee should be handed to him he would receive them with an ejaculation of gratitude. When the great chief Pontiac found that he could not intimidate Neyon to take up the hatchet against the English, he asked him for a keg of rum². The Indian's cruelty surpassed belief. When he was aroused his small, keen eyes shone like an angry snake's, the parted lips peeled their fiendish yell, the painted features

writhed with fear and fury and every passion of an Indian fight,—man, wolf and devil all in one³.

The tales of Indian torture of prisoners and of the Jesuits are almost too horrible to print. La Salle even saw them catch an alligator twelve feet long, which they tortured as if he were a human enemy, first putting out his eyes, and then leading him to the neighboring prairie, and there having confined him by a number of stakes they spent the entire day tormenting him.

VIII

But while Parkman dwells most on this side of the picture he does not conceal the other, and after all his picture is not so different from Cooper's as is often assumed. In the first place the Indian was a magnificent animal. His proportions were strong, symmetrical, and sometimes majestic⁴. When Benjamin West first saw the Apollo Belvidere in the Vatican he exclaimed, "A Mohawk!"

Parkman's host, Kongra-Tonga, drove into a buffalo's side a stone-tipped arrow up to the very notch at the end¹.

The Indian was fertile in expedients. Sometimes he wore a corselet made of barrel staves to guard himself from arrows³, and again he used his canoe for a shield, and then as a ladder to scale a barricade⁴.

IX

His fortitude no novelist could exaggerate. Here is an incident mentioned by Parkman:

“The too valiant Ononkwaya was among the victims. Even in death he took his revenge; for it was thought an augury of disaster to the victors if no cry of pain could be extorted from the sufferer, and on the present occasion he displayed an unflinching courage, rare even among Indian warriors. On the scaffold where he was burned he wrought himself into a fury which seemed to render him insensible to pain. Thinking him nearly spent his tormentors scalped him, when, to their amazement, he leaped up, snatched the brands that had been the instruments of his torture, drove the screeching crowd from the scaffold, and held them all at bay, while they pelted him from below with sticks, stones, and showers of live coals.

At length he made a false step and fell to the ground, when they seized him and threw him into the fire. He instantly leaped out, covered with blood, cinders and ashes, and rushed upon them with a blazing brand in each hand. The crowd gave way before him, and he ran towards the town, as if to set it on fire. They threw a pole across his way, which tripped him and flung him headlong to the earth, on which they all fell upon him, cut off his hands and feet, and again threw him into the fire. He rolled himself out, and crawled forward on his elbows and knees, glaring upon them with such unutterable ferocity that they recoiled once more, till, seeing that he was helpless, they threw themselves upon him and cut off his head⁴."

X

As to a sense of honor Parkman's testimony is conflicting. Grangula, the great orator of the Iroquois, "valued gifts, attentions and a good meal, and would pay for them abundantly in promises, which he kept or not, as his own interests or those of his

people might require⁷." But Parkman says, "The principle of honor was not extinct in these wild hearts⁴."

"Pontiac borrowed from his civilized foes the custom of promissory notes, drawn upon birch bark, and signed with the figure of an otter, the totem to which he belonged, and they were all faithfully redeemed²."

"Three of the Iroquois, immediately before the slaughter began, had received from Etienne a warning of their danger in time to make their escape. The year before he had been captured, with Brébeuf and Lalement, at the town of St. Louis, and had owed his life to these three warriors, to whom he now paid back the debt of gratitude⁴."

XI

His best summary of Indian character is the following:

"Nature has stamped the Indian with a hard and stern physiognomy. Ambition, revenge, envy, jealousy, are his ruling passions; and his cold temperament is little exposed to those effeminate vices which are the bane of milder races. With him revenge is

an overpowering instinct; nay, more, it is a point of honor and a duty. His pride sets all language at defiance. He loathes the thought of coercion; and few of his race have ever stooped to discharge a menial office. A wild love of liberty, an utter intolerance of control, lie at the basis of his character, and fire his whole existence. Yet, in spite of this haughty independence, he is a devout hero-worshipper; and high achievement in war or policy touches a chord to which his nature never fails to respond. He looks up with admiring reverence to the sages and heroes of his tribe; and it is this principle, joined to the respect for age springing from the patriarchal element in his social system, which, beyond all others, contributes union and harmony to the erratic members of an Indian community. With him the love of glory kindles into a burning passion; and to allay its cravings, he will dare cold and famine, fire, tempest, torture, and death itself.

XII

“These generous traits are overcast by

much that is dark, cold, sinister, by sleepless distrust, and rankling jealousy. Treacherous himself, he is always suspicious of treachery in others. Brave as he is,—and few of mankind are braver,—he will vent his passion by a secret stab rather than an open blow. His warfare is full of ambuscade and stratagem; and he never rushes into battle with that joyous self-abandonment with which the warriors of the Gothic races flung themselves into the ranks of their enemies. In his feasts and his drinking bouts we find none of that robust and full-toned mirth which reigned at the rude carousals of our barbaric ancestry. He is never jovial in his cups, and maudlin sorrow or maniacal rage is the sole result of his potations.

“Over all emotion he throws the veil of an iron self-control, originating in a peculiar form of pride, and fostered by rigorous discipline from childhood upward. He is trained to conceal passion, and not to subdue it. The inscrutable warrior is aptly imaged by the hackneyed figure of a volcano covered with snow; and no man can tell when or where the wild-fire will burst forth. This

shallow self-mastery serves to give dignity to public deliberation, and harmony to social life. Wrangling and quarrel are strangers to an Indian dwelling; and while an assembly of the ancient Gauls was garrulous as a convocation of magpies, a Roman senate might have taken a lesson from the grave solemnity of an Indian council¹."

XIII

With this equipment of the material required Parkman set out upon his great work. His original topic of the French and Indian war was broadened to include the French efforts at colonization in America, and he had the rare good fortune to complete the work originally laid out. Besides "The Oregon Trail", already mentioned, and "The Conspiracy of Pontiac", a preliminary work which chronologically follows the others, his history of the conflict between France and England for the control of America includes seven works, and reaches to the termination of the struggle in the battle at Quebec where Montcalm and Wolfe both lost their lives. The seven works

cover a comparatively short period, and hence they permit sufficient detail to make them intensely interesting. There are few novels better adapted to hold the attention of the reader than "The Jesuits in North America", or "LaSalle and the Discovery of the Great West".

XIV

Parkman had lived for a time in the Jesuit college in Rome, and had strong views from the Protestant standpoint of the danger of their system. He says that while they were supreme in Canada the country was not a colony, but a mission⁵; and again that the unchecked sway of priests has always been the most mischievous of tyrannies; and even were they all well-meaning and sincere, it would be so still⁴.

But of these Jesuit missionaries he says: "Their maligners may taunt them if they will with credulity, dull superstition, or a blind enthusiasm, but slander itself cannot accuse them of hypocrisy or ambition.
* * * As for the religion which the Jesuits taught them, however Protestants may

carp at it, it was the only form of Christianity likely to take root in their crude and barbarous nature. * * * Their patience, their kindness, their intrepidity, their manifest disinterestedness, the blamelessness of their lives, the tact which, in the utmost fervor of their zeal never failed them, had won the hearts of these wayward savages. * * * When we look for the results of these missions we soon become aware that the influence of the French and the Jesuits extended far beyond the circle of converts. It eventually modified and softened the manners of many unconverted tribes. In the wars of the next century we do not often find those examples of diabolic atrocity with which the earlier annals are crowded. The savage burned his enemies alive, it is true, but he rarely ate them; neither did he torment them with the same deliberation and persistency. He was a savage still, but not so often a devil⁴."

"The cause of the failure of the Jesuits is obvious. The guns and tomahawks of the Iroquois were the ruin of their hopes. Could they have curbed or converted those

ferocious bands, it is no less than certain that their dream would have become a reality⁴."

XV

The stories of the individual priests are fascinating in interest. What these French priests endured is almost beyond belief. Their daily food was a sort of mush made of pounded Indian corn, unsalted but boiled with smoked fish. Sometimes they had only acorns boiled with ashes, and sometimes not even acorns. The Indian boys threw sticks at them as they passed. Within their dwellings if smoke, fleas, and filth were not enough to prevent sleep, the dancing and thumping of the drums and tortoiseshells kept them awake all night.

Actual martyrdom came to some of them, as to Antoine Daniel. "The fierce yell of the war-whoop now rose close at hand. The palisade was forced and the enemy was in the town. The air quivered with the infernal din. 'Fly!' screamed the priest, driving his flock before him. 'I will stay here. We shall meet again in heaven.' Many of

them escaped by an opening in the palisade opposite to that by which the Iroquois had entered; but Daniel would not follow, for there still might be souls to rescue from perdition. The hour had come for which he had long prepared himself. In a moment he saw the Iroquois and came forth from the church to meet them. When they saw him in turn, radiant in the vestments of his office, confronting them with a look kindled with the inspiration of martyrdom, they stopped and stared in amazement; then recovering themselves, bent their bows, and showered him with a volley of arrows, that tore through his robes and flesh. A gunshot followed; the ball pierced his heart, and he fell dead, gasping the name of Jesus. They rushed upon him with yells of triumph, stripped him naked, gashed and hacked his lifeless body, and, scooping his blood in their hands, bathed their faces in it to make them brave! ”

Still, more horrible was the death of Brébeuf, the lion of the Huron mission, of which Garnier was the lamb; and the lamb was as fearless as the lion[†].

XVI

Of Parkman's rank as a historian Winsor says: "Thus great in his natural powers and great in the use he has made of them, Parkman was no less great in his occasion and his theme. Of all American historians he is the most deeply and peculiarly American; yet he is at the same time the broadest and most cosmopolitan. The book which depicts at once the social life of the stone age and the conflict of the English political ideal over the ideal which France inherited from imperial Rome, is a book for all mankind and for all time. The more adequately man's historical perspective gets adjusted, the greater will it seem. Strong in its individuality, and like to nothing beside, it clearly belongs I think among the world's few masterpieces of the highest rank, along with the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Gibbons. * * *

"It is a widespread opinion that American history is commonplace and dull, and as for the American red man he is often thought to be finally disposed of when we have stig-

matized him as a blood-thirsty demon and grovelling beast. It is safe to say that those who entertain such opinions have never read Mr. Parkman. * * *

“As we look at the changes wrought in the last fifty years we realize that the opportunities by which he profited in youth are in large measure lost. He came not a moment too soon to catch the fleeting light and fix it upon his immortal canvas. Thus Parkman is to be regarded as first of all the historian of primitive society. No other great historian has dealt intelligently and consecutively with such phases of barbarism as he describes with such loving minuteness.

XVII

“Before he had graduated from college there had sprung up in America a new school of historical writing. Most of the members of it were in Cambridge and in Boston, crowding the libraries, public and private, which in those days were most conspicuous in that region, and sure to excite an interest in historical development. It was only two years before Parkman became a freshman at

Harvard that the first chair of history in any American college was filled there by Jared Sparks, and it was to this Mentor that this young historian was later to incribe his first venture in historical narrative. When Jared Sparks took his place behind a professor's desk George Ban-



GEORGE BANCROFT. 1800-1891

croft had been before the public four years with the initial volume of his life work. When Sparks a few years later became the instructor of Parkman the service which

that professor had already done to our own history was the most conspicuous that any American had rendered. Sparks had then completed the first series of the American Biography. He had told for the first time with scrupulous care the stories of French seekers in the great West where his young friend was to follow him. He had edited

the Diplomatic Correspondence of the Revolution, had written the Life of Gouverneur Morris, and had established for his countrymen the ideals of Washington and Franklin.

XVIII

“In strong contrast both in subject and



and method with what Bancroft and Sparks were doing, and much nearer the model which the young historian had already figured, was a new writer, who in the very

WM. HICKLING PRESCOTT, 1796-1859

year when Sparks assumed his professorship, made the name of Prescott synonymous with the best that our western scholarship in history at that time could hope to offer for European distinction.

“Parkman had already published his ‘Pontiac’, and had lapsed into a condition of body that made it seem as if his genius

were to be permanently eclipsed by his infirmities, when a still more brilliant opening of a career was signalized by the appearance of 'The Rise of the Dutch Republic'. Ten years were to pass before Parkman could



JOHN LOTHROP MOTLEY, 1814-1877

produce the first of that series with which his name is indissolubly connected, and by which he has made the story of the rise and decline of the French war in America entirely his own. By this time Motley in his 'United Netherlands' had rounded the measure of his fame, and Prescott and Sparks had left us.

XIX

"In these four conspicuous historians who thus conjointly relieved their countrymen from any reproach for want of distinc-

tion in a dignified branch of letters, Park-



FRANCIS PARKMAN. 1823-1893

man had examples of brilliant merit, and their careers supplied to his recuperated energy incentives and models. The rising historian was now in his 43d year, and his mind had been drilled in such exertions and had been forced to such restraints as few men had ever encountered. Remembering this we can better understand the remarkable repression of superfluities in the treatment of his themes. He was too genuine to be an imitator, and the eclectic instinct had become strongly developed by his being obliged to hold in his memory what had been read to him. It is not difficult to see how the school of American historians that had grown up in these forty years had an influence upon him, while at the same time his own independence of character enabled him to emancipate himself from any thralldom¹⁶."

XX

In style Parkman has the art which conceals art. John Fiske says: "In all these volumes of strict and significant detail one is never conscious of the literary attitude and of the literary intent to amuse and impress. Mr. Parkman soberly and simply portrays the conditions of that strange colony of priests, lawyers and soldiers without artificial grouping, and reserves his own sense of the artistic charm which the reader will be sure to feel in the work. * * *

"If one will think with what good sense and discretion the rich material is managed in a time when there has been so much meretricious historical writing disfigured by the wretched egotism of the writers and falsified by their literary posturing and their disposition to color whole epochs from a single picturesque event—in a time when, to say it briefly, Hepworth Dixon has descended directly, however illegitimately, from Thomas Carlyle—one will be the more grateful to the author who has given us this valuable and charming book. There is

material enough in it for innumerable romances, for many volumes of historical sketching, eked out as such things are with plausible conjecture and conscious comment. Mr. Parkman, one readily sees it—does not lack at any moment due sense of the strangeness of the situation he depicts. A lurking smile lights up the gravity of his narrative at times, and it all glows from an imagination which the sublime and poetic facts never fail to kindle; but he addresses himself with direct simplicity to the business of making the reader understand him, and discern the course of events. This accomplished he leaves the story to the possession of the delighted fancy¹⁴.”

XXI

He was no less indefatigable in pursuit of recorded facts than in obtaining impressions of his own. He made seven visits to Europe, and gave to the Massachusetts Historical Society 200 folio volumes of documents, of which 26 were used in the *Montcalm* and *Wolfe* volumes alone. His life was so inseparable from his books that the

reader is apt to forget how much he lived outside of them. He was a man of wealth and refined tastes, president for six years of the St. Botolph Club, Boston, and for fourteen years overseer and fellow of Harvard college.

He gave much of his time to his garden, became president of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, published in 1866 "The Book of Roses", and was successful in the hybridization of lilies and other flowers.

Like Motley he was an unsuccessful novelist, publishing in 1856 "Vassall Morton".

The death of his wife in 1858 broke up his home, and he spent much of his subsequent time in Europe. He died at the ripe age of three-score and ten, having labored fifty years on his chosen work.

XXII

Underwood says of him:

"The writer well remembers seeing Parkman frequently during this period walking on the Boston Common with the aid of a cane, his figure attenuated and unsteady, his eyes shaded from the light, his face pale but

animated by a serene and indomitable courage. He had to forego even looking at a newspaper, not alone on account of weak eyes, but on account of a painful sensation in his head, like that of wearing an iron crown. He lived however full of hope, continuing his great and costly preparations for future work with abiding faith that somehow he would be able to accomplish it. It was painful to see such energy and will fettered by a feeble bodily frame, but inspiring to think of the soul superior to its environment. With robust health what might not such a man have accomplished and enjoyed. * * *

“Parkman is rather above middle height, slender and sinewy, with a thin but agreeable and thoughtful face and engaging manners. He lives in summer at Jamaica Plain, one of the suburbs of Boston, where he is noted as a successful cultivator of roses, a taste which he shares with the venerable Bancroft. In winter he lives in Chestnut street, Boston, on what is known as Beacon Hill, near the beautiful Common, and but a short distance from the house once occupied

by Prescott. It is an interesting fact that Bancroft once lived on the other side of the Common, and that Motley also lived on Beacon Hill; so that the four leading American historians were residents of the same part of one city, and were friendly neighbors^{1 3}."

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George W. Cable

OCTOBER 12

GEORGE W. CABLE

I

As Cooper and Parkman have fixed for all time the features of the American Indian, so Cable is in literature the creator of the Creole. More than this is true. One might be fairly familiar with the Indian without having read Cooper or Parkman, but no one who has not lived in Louisiana can even conceive of the Creole without having read Cable. The features of the Indian, contradictory as some of them are, are bold and easily comprehended. The traits of the Creole are elusive; we cannot account for the impression he makes upon us. Narcisse⁵, for instance, is a vain, ignorant braggart, who, on lying pretences and to put flowers in his buttonhole borrows and never repays the last dollar of a family he knows to be

suffering for food. Suppose Elizabeth Stuart Phelps were writing the story, in what hard lines she would have drawn him. But in Cable's hands his vanity is so ingenuous, his ignorance so naive, his rascality so transparent, his indolence so becoming, his temper so sunny, his good-nature so beaming, his every trait and motion so full of grace, that like John Richling we can but feel our cares lightened in his company, and we join the author in eulogizing him in his hero's grave.

II

“What Bret Harte has done for the stern angularity of western life Mr. Cable has wrought in infinitely finer and subtler lines for his soft-featured and passionate native land. Those who come after him in delineation of Creole character can only be followers in his footsteps, for to him belongs the credit of striking this new vein, so rich in promise of fulfilment. An alien coming among them would be as one who speaks a different tongue; he would be impressed only by superficial peculiarities, and would chronicle them from his standpoint. But

Mr. Cable knows these people to the heart's core; he is saturatéd with their individuality and conditions; to him their very inflection of voice, turn of the head, motion of the hands, is eloquent with meaning¹⁸."

III

He has brought into literature also the Acadians, those exiles from Newfoundland of whom we learned something in *Evangeline*, who settled in northern Louisiana swamps, where they have grown up a people by themselves, with cheeks and chins that never know a razor, and slumbrous agility in their strong, supple loins. A negro tells Bonaventure:

"Oh, dey good sawt o' peop', yes. Dey deals fair an' dey deals square. Dey keeps de peace. Dass 'caze dey mos'ly don't let whisky git on deir blin' side, you know. Dey *does* love to dance, and dey marries mawnstus young; but dey not like some niggehs: dey stays married. An' modess? Dey dess so modess dey shy! Yes, seh, dey de shyesh', easy-goin'es', modesses', most p'esumin' peop' in de whole worl'! I don't

see fo' why folks talk 'gin dem Cajun'; on'y dey a lil bit slow³."

IV

He has also dealt with the southern problems of slavery and of reconstruction. His long residence in Louisiana and his service in the confederate army make him a competent witness, and though his depictions are widely repudiated at the south they appeal to the unprejudiced reader as careful, conscientious, and keen. Mr. Cable recognized that his plain-speaking would provoke criticism; he says himself: "So much easier is it to brand a man,—or a book—for hotly speaking wrong than for mildly leaving the right unspoken. Let us have strength; it is one of age's best meanings. For me, I'd rather any day a man's speech—or page—should have too much pepper than too little salt⁹."

V

Slavery is a buried issue, and his pictures of its horrors seem belated: we could well spare the story of Bras-Coupé⁴. But he gives us more vivid pictures than are found

elsewhere of the f. m. c., the free man of color, especially the quadroon, the man "of strong feeling and feeble will (the trait of his caste⁴).'" "Your class" Frowenfeld says to Honoré Grandissime, "—the free quadroons—are the saddest slaves of all. Your men, for a little property, and your women, for a little amorous attention, let themselves be shorn even of the virtue of discontent, and for a paltry bait of sham freedom have consented to endure a tyrannous contumely which flattens them into the dirt like grass under a slab. I would rather be a runaway in the swamps than content myself with such freedom. As your class stands before the world to-day—free in form but slaves in spirit—you are—I do not know but I was almost ready to say—a warning to philanthropists⁴!"

VI

"John March" depicts for us the south in process of reconstruction, when "the ex-master spurned political fellowship with his slave at every cost; the ex-slave laid taxes, stole them, and was murdered⁶."

“ Well seh,” Captain Shotwell explained, “ ow boys fi-ud and cha’ged, an’ the niggehs, of co’sse, run, leavin’ three dead and fo’ wounded; aw, accawdin’ to latest accounts, seven dead n’ no wounded. The niggehs taken shelteh in the church, ow boys fallen back fo’ reinfo’cements, an’ about a’ hour by sun comes word that the niggehs, frenzied with raage and liquo’, a-comin’ this way to the numbeh o’ three hund’ed, an’ increasin’ as they come. —No’ seh, I don’t know that. it *is* unfawtunate. It’s just as well foaw this thing to happm, an’ to happm now. It’ll teach both sides, as Garnet said awhile-ago addressin’ the crowd, that the gov’ment o’ Dixie’s simply got to paas, this time, away f’om a raace that can’t p’eserve awdeh, an’ be undividedly transfehed to the raace God-A’mighty appointed to gov’n⁴!”

VII

In all of these historic portrayals much of the vividness depends on the exactness with which the dialects are reproduced. We have already quoted specimens from the speech of the negro, and from that of the

southern white with its absence of the letter *r* —“that plague of all nations,” Mr. Cable calls it: “before consonants it disappears; before vowels the tongue fails of that upward curve which make the good strong *r*'s of Italy and Great Britain³.”

The Acadians too, have their dialect.

“No, dear chil'run,” Bonaventure directs, “but grasp hold, every one, the ropes, the cawds,—the shawt chil'run reaching up shawtly, the long chil'run the more longly.”

“The State ought to build you a good schoolhouse,” said the stranger, with a slight frown that seemed official.

“Ah, sir,” cried the young schoolmaster, beaming gratitude from his whole surface, “I—I,”—he smote his breast, “I would reimburst her in good citizen' and mother' of good citizen'! and both reading, writing, and also ciphering,—arithmeticalating, in the English tongue, and grammatically! But enter and investigate³.”

This is the way Claude reads

“Down in a green and shady bed
A modest violet grew.”

“Dah-oon-a hin hay grin and-a shad-y
 bade—A mo-dest-a vy-ee-lit grōo—Hits-a
 stallk whoz baint hit hawngg-a hits hade—
 Has hif-a too hah-ed-a frawm ve-ōo. Hand
 h-yet it whoz a lo-vly flow’r—Hits-a co-lors-a
 brah-eet and fair-a—Heet maheet-a hāve
 grass-ed a rozzy bow’r—Heenstade-a hof
 hah-ee-lingg there³. ”

VIII

But the Creole dialect is the delight of Mr. Cable’s books, and especially of his readings, where one has the good fortune to hear him. “I make a lill fi’ biff⁵,” is their way of saying “I will make a little fire first”. “An’ honisse weigh!” said Narcisse, planting his empty cup in his saucer, with the energy of his asservation; “an’, Mr. Bison, thass a ve’y seldom thing⁶!”

When Lady Byron dies Narcisse puts a black band about his hat, and says, “I thought it but p’opeh to put some moaning—as a species of twibute. You like the tas’e of that, Mistoo Itchlin? * * *

“Did you evva yeh those line’ of Lawd By’on,—

Then was a soun' of wibalwy by night,
'en—'Ush—' ark !—A deep saun'
stwike'—?
Thaz by Lawd By'on. Yesseh⁵."

IX

But great as is the historical and descriptive value of Mr. Cable's books, it is not their chief claim, for apart from this they are literature of a very high type. Different as the two writers are, there is something in Mr. Cable's style that reminds one of Thackeray. There is much of the same latent and pervasive humor; much of the same letting the reader into the writer's inner confidence.

"He had no much power to formulate his large conclusions, as you, or even I have⁸," Mr. Cable says familiarly to his reader. There is always the man behind the story-teller, a man you love and trust.

X

Mr. Cable says of his art: "As a geologist's great treasury of verities lies mainly in the rocks and clays everywhere underfoot, the story-teller's lies so largely in the

common soil of the human heart that the power of his imagination, the range of his sympathies, and *the stature and beauty of his spirit* far more than any store of knowledge or finish of training will determine *his art*.*'' The words italicized fit themselves more and more closely to Mr. Cable as one becomes better acquainted with his stories.

The greatest commandment of the novelist's calling, he says, is to make you feel to-day that you are entertained, and find to-morrow that you are profited^o. It would be difficult to name stories of which this is truer than of his. Even when George Washington Tarbox tells about the school-examination*³ to a party of drummers about a tavern fire, one of them says:

"Oh!—but really, now, in good earnest, it is good. It's good in more ways than one. Now, you know, that man, hid away there in the swamp of Grande Pointe, he little thinks that six or eight men away off here in Vermillionville are going to bed to-night better men—that's it, sir—yes, sir, that's it

* Given in the School Bulletin for April, 1887 (xiii. 88.)

—yes sir!—better men—just for having heard of him!”

XI

This is not because his stories are didactic, like those of Mrs. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps-Ward (see page 327). There is nowhere the suspicion of a sermon, or of twisting the facts to point a moral. It is because Mr. Cable's ideal is so high and yet so human, so uplifting, and yet so possible, so self-sacrificing and yet so attainable, that his heroes are near enough to be friends, and yet enough above us to be an inspiration. Of these Bonaventure is the most complete type, most fully “discovering the great rule of civilization, every man not for self but for every other.” “It seems to me if I could make myself like any man in dat whole world,” says Claude “I rather make myself like Bonaventure³.”

But John March never falters when it is a question of manliness; and what glimpses we have of John March's father, proprietor of a thousand acres and yet making his own shoes, always a loving and deferent hus-

hand with as little encouragement as man could have, and dying, his heart broken with joy, when his son became a college-graduate.

XII

Mr. Cable's style is delightful. It is terse, condensed, meaty, abounding in delicate touches that give the reader the delight of discovery. He is fond of antithesis. "John was with them, laboring under the impression that they were with him⁶."

Reisen "was earnestly conversing and bending over a small, alert fellow, in a rakish beaver and very smart coat, with the blue flowers of modesty bunched saucily in one button-hole⁵."

"I know I don't know as much as I think I do," Barbara says; "I only wish I knew as much as I don't⁶."

"I picked up cords of information," G. W. Tarbox says, "but an ounce of education is worth a ton of information⁵."

"Launcelot's failures," said Garnet, "make a finer show than most men's successes. He'd rather shine without succeeding, than succeed without shining⁶."

“While Garnet explained to Mr. Gamble why negroes had to be treated not as individuals but as a class, John had been telling Mr. Fair why it was wise to treat chickens not as a class but as individuals⁶.”

“There always seemed a reserve of merriment behind Miss Garnet’s gravity, and a reserve of gravity behind her brightest gayety⁶.”

Even Cornelius Leggett wants “champagne faw ow real frien’s an’ real pain faw ow sham frien’s, an’ plenty o’ both kine⁶.”

“Daphne’s pious parents had sent her for two or three terms to the preparatory department of Suez university, where she had learned to read, write and add—she had been born with a proficiency in subtraction⁶.”

XIII

Metaphors abound, often of the boldest.

“A man’s dress is on’y a sort o’ skin, anyhow; a woman’s is her plumage⁶.”

“Barbara had a droll liking for long words, and often deployed them as skirmishers in the rear⁶.”

"They are like a wood-sawyer robbed of his saw-horse and trying to saw wood in his lap⁶."

"One of the things I pity most in this vain world is a hive of patriots who don't know where to swarm⁴."

"Haste was a thing they were beginning to make large quantities of in Suez. It has some resemblance to speed⁶."

"Daphne Dalrymple, her own asbestos affections warmed but not ignited, walked away with the celluloid heart of Dinwiddie Pettigrew in a light blaze⁶."

Frowenfeld defines amateurism as "a kind of ambitious indolence that lays very large eggs, but can neither see the necessity for building a nest beforehand, nor command the patience to hatch the eggs afterwards⁴."

XIV

His humor is sometimes rollicking.

"One has to have a female parent in order to get into this world—no gentleman admitted without a lady⁶."

"I know that whirling this way through this beautiful country is inspiring you right

now to write half a dozen poems. I'd like to see you on one of those lovely hillsides in fine frenzy rolling'—He said he meant her eye⁶."

The spy tells Mary of a man "so conscientious that when a highwayman attacked him onct, he wouldn't holla murder nor he wouldn't holla thief, 'cause he wasn't certain whether the highwayman wanted to kill him or to rob him⁵."

XV

Few writers are more vivid in description.

"His elbow neighbor on the train slept in the shape of an N⁶." When Narcisse enlisted "life was one scintillating cluster breastpin of ecstasies⁵!"

"The precentor sang every word in argumentative staccato, and in high passages you could see his wisdom teeth⁶."

"Halliday, viewing matters impartially in the clear, calm light of petroleum torches, justified Congress in acts which Garnet termed 'the spume of an insane revenge'; while Garnet, with equal calmness of judgment, under other petroleum torches, glo-

ried in the 'masterly inactivity' of Dixie's whitest and best—which Launcelot denounced as a foolish and wicked political strike⁶."

Barbara has gone to sleep during the long prayer.

"Her fan stops. An unearthly sweetness, an unconditioned bliss, a heavenly disembodiment too perfect for ecstasy, an oblivion surcharged with light, a blessed rarefaction of self that fills the house, the air, the sky, and ascends full of sweet odors and soothing sounds, wafts her up on the cadenced lullaby of the long, long prayer. The head, heavy with luminous brown hair, careens gently upon one cheek; that ineffably sweet dissolution into all nature and space comes again, and far up among the cream-clouds, just as she is about to recognize certain happy faces, there is a rush of sound, a flood of consternation, a start, a tumbling in of consciousness, the five senses leap to their stations, and she sits upright fluttering her fan and glancing around upon the seated congregation. The pastor has said amen⁶."

XVI

His descriptions of nature are delightful.

"The pale banana slowly fanned herself with her own broad leaf⁵," he says, reminding one of Browning's

"Armed like the ermine in her own soft snow."

"White and yellow butterflies sat and sipped and fanned themselves, like human butterflies at a seaside⁶."

"The jays were everywhere, foppish, flip-pant, the perfection of privileged rudeness⁶."

"A mocking-bird hopped, and ran back and forth, singing as if he must sing or die⁵."

"Up from among the cedar sprouts turtle-doves sprang with that peculiar music of their wings, flew into distant coverts, and from one such to another tenderly complained of love's alarms and separations⁶."

"He heard far away the hawk screaming to his mate, and maybe, looking up, caught a glimpse of him sailing in the upper air with the sunlight glowing in his pinions; or in some bush near by heard the soft rustle

of the wren, or the ruffling whiff and the nervous 'chip' of the cardinal, or saw for an instant the flirt of his crimson robes as he rattled the stiff, jagged fans of the palmetto³."

XVII

He is much given to personifying nature.

"She had arrived in March and caught Dame Nature in the midst of her spring cleaning, scolding her patient children⁶."

"The sun came up over Widewood with a shout, hallooing to Rosemont a promise for all Dixie of the most ripening hours, thus far, of the year, and woods, fields, orchards, streams answered with a morning incense⁶."

"The passionate southern sky looking down and seeing some six thousand or seventy-five hundred of her favorite children disconcerted and shivering, tried in vain for two hours to smile upon them with a little frozen sunshine, and finally burst into tears⁴."

"And here, if one must tell a thing so painful, our old friend the mocking bird,

neglecting his faithful wife, and letting his home go to decay, kept dropping in all hours of the day, tasting the berries' rank pulp, stimulating, stimulating, drowning care, you know,—‘Lost so many children, and the rest gone off in ungrateful forgetfulness of their old hard-working father; yes;’ and ready to sing or fight, just as any other creature happened not to wish; and going home in the evening scolding and swaggering, and getting to be barely able to hang onto the roost. It would have been bad enough even for a man; but for a bird—and a mocking-bird³!”

XVIII

“Indeed I will venture this as an axiom,” Mr. Cable says; “if I never venture a second: that the true story-teller is always a good lover⁴.” No one can doubt that Mr. Cable is himself a good lover. “This ain’t the lan’ o’ divo’ces seh,” Captain Shotwell says; “this is the lan’ of loose engagements an’ tight marriages⁵.”

John and Mary Richling are ideals to

many a young married couple. Mary fears John is too much absorbed in her.

"I'm willing to be *more* than all the rest of the world to you," she says; "I always must be that. I'm going to be that forever. And you"—she kissed him passionately—"you're all the world to me! But I've no right to be all the world to you. And you mustn't allow it. It's making it too small!"

XIX

Barbara's "baffled mind drifted into fantasy, and the hoary question, whether it is wiser for a maiden to love first, hoping to be chosen accordingly, or to be chosen first and hope to love accordingly, became itself an age-worn relic from woman's earlier and harder lot, left by its glaciers as they had melted in the warmth of more modern suns." But when her lover argues with her she sees clearly.

"But love should never be all or chiefly a passion," he urges. "The love of a mother for her child, of brother and sister for each other, however passionate, springs first from a relationship, and rises into passion as a

plant springs from its root into bloom. Why **should** not all love do so? Why should only **this, the** most perilous kind, be made an exception?’

“‘Because,’ softly interrupted Barbara, glad of a moment’s refuge in abstractions, ‘it belongs to the only relationship that comes by choice!’”

XX

On his father’s side Mr. Cable came of an old colonial Virginian family, which left England in the earliest years, of the 18th century, and is now largely represented in Virginia. Owing perhaps to the early death of Mr. Cable’s father, he has given few tokens of his Virginian ancestry. The old New England stock represented in his mother constitutes it would seem the warp and woof of his nature, though it has been not a little influenced by the characteristics of his gallic neighbors¹⁰.

“Not a little of his peculiar quality,” says Mr. Waring, “and very much of his peculiar development, may be traced to the Puritan element in his composition—a Puri-

tanism inherited, cultivated, and **stalwart**, but a Puritanism mellowed by the **sunny** sky under which he has grown, **humanized** by the peace and cordial habit of **Southern** life, and made wise, forbearing and **discreet**.

--almost made not to be Puritanism at all,
--by an all-embracing and **ever-vigilant** sense of humor, which is as quick to **check** his own act as to catch his neighbor's **lapse**; a sense of humor which ripples at **every** shoaling of the serious stream of his life and work⁸.

XXI

His father and mother were married in 1834 in Indiana, whence they removed to New Orleans after the financial crisis of 1837. In New Orleans Mr. Cable prospered in financial pursuits until sometime after the birth of the subject of this sketch. In 1859, after a second disastrous failure the father died leaving the family so reduced in their circumstances that young Cable, born Oct. 12, 1844, was obliged to leave school at the age of 14 and aid in their support⁸. We reproduce from the Strand Magazine a series of portraits taken at different periods.



AGE 9

Something of his experience in search of



AGE 19



AGE 24

employment was doubtless the foundation of several chapters in "Dr. Sevier".

In 1863 he enlisted in the 4th Mississippi cavalry, in which he served until the close of the war. After another year in the counting-room he joined a State surveying party detailed to take the contour of crevasses on the



AGE 38

Atchafalaya river. The whole company was prostrated by a virulent malarial fever, from which Mr. Cable did not recover for two years. These experiences were the basis of "Bonaventure". He then became once more a book-



PRESENT DAY

keeper, and was promoted until he filled positions of considerable trust.

XXII

In 1879 he withdrew from such pursuits to devote himself altogether to literature. He had served quite an apprenticeship. After writing for the New Orleans Picayune weekly essays upon subjects of passing note, he acted some time as reporter, but resigned on conscientious grounds when required to attend and criticize a theatrical performance. He had occupied leisure moments in writing short stories of New Orleans life, and when representatives of Scribner's Monthly visited New Orleans and made his acquaintance they persuaded him to forward stories to the magazine. These stories were published and afterwards gathered in a volume called "Old Creole Days". Two of them, "Madame Delpine", and "Posson' Jone'" are, with the second part of "Bonaventure", still the most popular of his readings.

The magazine now asked for a continued story, and he wrote "The Grandissimes" (1880). For a long time he had cherished

scruples against novel-reading, but his convictions had been completely changed by reading George Macdonald's "Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood".

"Dr. Sevier" (1883) was also written by contract with the Century magazine. Then came "Bonaventure" (1888), a prose pastoral, the middle section of which, "Grande Pointe", is the highwater mark of Mr. Cable's writings. "John March" (1894) followed, and it is understood that another story has been accepted by the publishers and still another is nearly finished. While his stories are what he will be remembered by, he has done other literary work, as in "Strange True Stories of Louisiana", "The Creoles of Louisiana" (1884), "The Silent South" (1885), "The Negro Question" (1890), and the "Life of William Gilmour Sims" (1890).

XXIII

While delivering a series of lectures at Johns Hopkins university on literary art he ventured upon the suggestion of President Gilman to read selections from his own fic-

tion. The result was a surprise to him. Not only was the audience unstinted in its applause, but he realized himself that he was endowed with an unusual faculty of interpretation⁸. This led to readings which have since been continued, and during the present year he has given them in England with marked success.

After his removal to Northampton in 1885 he began a series of talks on the Sunday-school lessons, which ended in a class with an enrollment of 700, and for fifteen months this work was continued in Boston, where he stood before audiences of more than twice that number. He here elaborated the Bible studies he had pursued while a soldier, beside the camp fire, his boyish frame wearied with the long day's march. He also founded the Home Culture Club, which movement, beginning in Northampton, has extended through several States. It is a plan for home extension, seeking either to supply club associations which will serve as a substitute for home associations, or to promote ideal conditions in cheerless homes⁸.

XXIV

His home in Northampton is a delightful spot known as "Tarryawhile, Dryad's Green". In "John March" he has given many pictures of Northampton scenery, especially of "Paradise", so well known to all Smith college girls. His home life is of the happiest.

"On paper it is hard to express the charm of his individuality, for the pleasure of listening to his sunny talk, with its quaint turns of thought, and felicitous phrases which spring continually to his lips. Those who have been impressed by the deep humanity that made him write such a book as 'Dr. Sevier' will find the man and the author one and indivisible. Nothing is forced or uttered for the sake of making an impression, and the listener may be sure that Mr. Cable is saying what he thinks.

"In person Mr. Cable is tall and slight, with chestnut hair, beard, and mustache. There is a marked development of the forehead above the eyebrows, supposed by believers in phrenology to indicate unusual

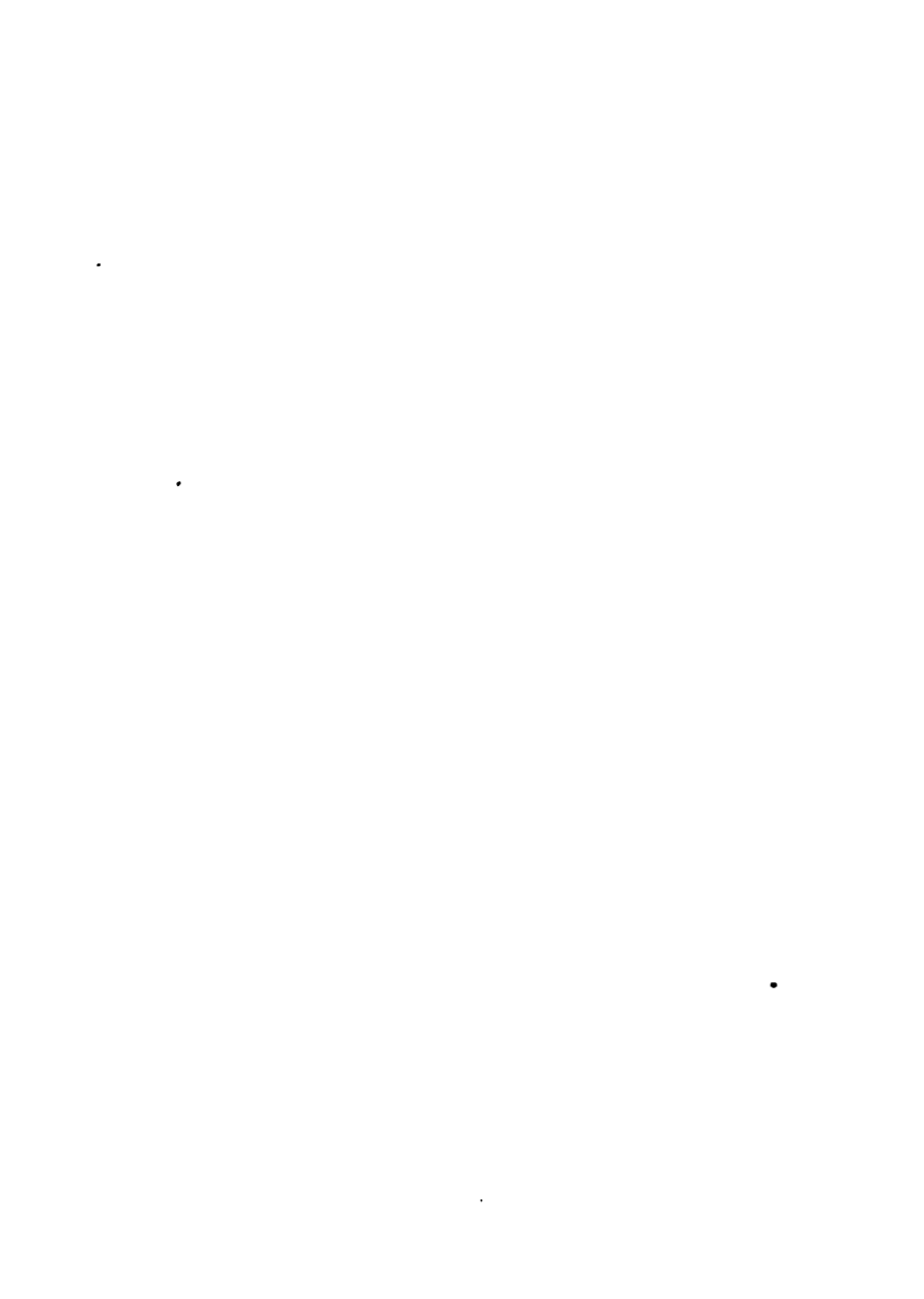
musical talent¹³." "Sometimes when I am very warmly applauded," he often says in his readings, "I sing some of these creole songs;" and no audience fails to applaud warmly enough to get them. Among his friends he often accompanies himself on the guitar, which he plays with delightful touch.

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Thomas Bailey Aldrich



NOVEMBER 11

Thomas Bailey Aldrich

I

Like Mrs. Ward Mr. Aldrich has given us a partial autobiography³¹ in "The Story of a Bad Boy" who, the author takes repeated pains to assure us, was not such a *very* bad boy. He wrote it in 1869 for a magazine called *Our Young Folks*, and with an exaggeration intended to be humorous that robs it of much of its value. When he says he has seen Pepper Whitcomb's snowballs turn a corner, and that when Mugridge was drawn inside the breastworks fifteen boys sat down on him to keep him quiet, the reader feels that the author is not content,

like Mr. Cable, to suggest the humor inherent in incidents that actually occur, but interpolates the humor by misreporting the facts. Indeed the book is much inferior to all of Mr. Aldrich's other work, and should be read only when his other stories and his poems have inspired an admiration too strong to be disturbed.

II

From this and other sources we learn that he was born in Portsmouth, N. H., Nov. 11, 1836, the son of a wealthy southern banker. His early childhood was spent in New Orleans, but he came back to Portsmouth to prepare for college. When he was about ready to enter Harvard, his father met with reverses in business, and he entered the counting-room of an uncle in New York. His bent toward authorship had shown itself in newspaper and magazine contributions, with such favor that in 1855 he gave up his clerkship and became connected with the New York Evening Mirror.

From 1856 to 1859 he was assistant editor



NATHANIAL PARKER WILLIS,
1806-1867.

of the *Home Journal*, then in charge of *N. P. Willis*, who gave him appreciation and encouragement he is always glad to acknowledge³¹. He afterwards joined the *Saturday Press*, and

early in the civil war was for a time a news-



WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS, 1837—

paper correspondent. From 1865 to 1874 he was editor of *Every Saturday*, Boston, and from 1881 to 1890 of *The Atlantic Monthly*, succeeding Mr. Howells.

III

His editorial work in Boston had brought



JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, 1819-1891.

him into the inner circle of the most remarkable group of literary men this country has known. When Mr. Lowell went to Europe in the early 70's he

turned over the keys of Elmwood to Mr. Aldrich. Hawthorne had long



NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, 1804-1864.

before sought him out, attracted by a poem called *Père Antoine's Date Palm*. In fact life has always been easy for him. He was born a patrician, and brought up with a little

black Sam at the south to kick more or less

gently when anything went wrong with him; and after he came north, Sailor Ben to look after him, a pony of his own, and an extra five dollars to spend on fourth of July⁹. It was a disappointment to miss a Harvard course, but that university afterwards gave him an honorary A.M., which was duplicated by Yale. Not long ago a friend who died left him a hundred thousand dollars in a single lump. It would be difficult to draw a more complete contrast in material conditions than between his life and, for instance, Poe's.

IV

But he shows in all his writings what no material conditions can confer,—the unmistakable touch of the gentleman. "What it is that constitutes a gentleman," he says somewhere, "is an open question; it is not culture, for I have known ignorant men who were gentlemen and earnest scholars who were not. It is not money, nor grace, nor goodness, nor patience—it is something indefinable, like poetry⁵."

It is indefinable, but it is unmistakable, and the reader has in all of Aldrich's writing a constant consciousness of it.

V

One element of it is embodied in the most common characterization of his writings, that they are dainty. This is true both of subject and of execution. He has no stomach for what is called realism.

“ The mighty Zolaistic Movement now
Engrosses us—a miasmatic breath
Blown from the slums. We paint life as
it is,
The hideous side of it, with careful pains,
Making a god of the dull Common-
place²¹. ”

Even his villains are men of good aspect,
George Nevins⁵ for instance.

“ Say what you will, and paint things as
you may,
The devil is not black, with horn and hoof,
As gossips picture him: he is a person
Quite scrupulous of doublet and de-
meanor²⁰. ”

VI

He is so scrupulous in workmanship that
it is said no poem leaves his study till it has:

been three times re-written with his own pen.

“ Great thoughts in crude, unshapely verse
set forth,

Lose half their preciousness, and ever
must.

Unless the diamond with its own rich dust
Be cut and polished, it seems little
worth¹⁹. ”

Of course he sees that workmanship is
not all.

“ ‘ Let art be all in all,’ one time I said,
And straightway stirred the hypercritic
gall.

I said not, ‘ Let technique be all in all,’
But art,—a wider meaning. Worthless,
dead—

The shell without its pearl, the corpse of
things—

Mere words are, till the spirit lend them
wings.

The poet who wakes no soul within his lute
Falls short of art: ’twere better he were
mute²³. ”

VII

But the daintiness is not all or most. There is the gentle touch of an inborn fine instinct. How grateful to the reader is Mr. Dent's remark to Margaret after a long dissension:

"Many a time you must have felt the lack of a gentler hand than mine to guide you. You never needed guidance more than now. I wish I knew what wise words Mercy would speak to her child if she were alive⁵."

Perhaps in all his writings there is nothing tenderer than his story of *The Little Violinist*, "only six years and a half old, and had been before the public nearly two years."

"He retired quite early, and about midnight his father heard him say, 'Gracious God, make room for another little child in Heaven!' No sound was heard after this, and his father spoke to him soon afterwards; he received no answer, but found his child dead¹⁹."

VIII

In his delineation of character he is a

keen but a kindly observer. He can laugh
at woman's caprices,

“ For when was ever woman logical

Both day and night-time? Not since
Adam fell²⁰ ! ”

“ ‘ Don't be asking me,’ cried Molly,
pressing her palms to her eyes as if to shut
out the sight, but taking all the while a
secret creepy satisfaction in living the scene
over again⁸. ”

But he knows the other side.

“ How blindly you read her,

Or any woman ! Yes, I know. I grant
How small we often seem in our small world
Of trivial cares and narrow precedents—
Lacking that wide horizon stretched for
men,

Capricious, spiteful, frightened at a
mouse;

But when it comes to suffering mortal
pangs,

The weakest of us measures pulse with
you²¹. ”

“ How love thrills even commonest girl-clay,
Ennobling it an instant, if no more²¹ ! ”

IX

Women should be grateful to him for Margaret Sloetum⁸.

"If I required a word of denial from him I should care very little whether he was innocent or not," she says, and she means it. The love-making between her and Richard Shackford is original enough to be piquant to sated novel-readers, and sweet enough to establish a new standard, proving that a young woman may be frank without losing a tinge of modesty. In fact his understanding of the mutual relations of young people is on a much higher plane than is commonly met. For instance:

"So he is off; the silly youth

Knoweth not love in sober sooth.

He loves—thus lads at first are blind—

No woman, only Womankind!¹⁸."

"To him all women were charming in various degrees. He had that general susceptibility which preserves us the breed of bachelors. The constant victim of a series of minor emotions, he was saved from any major passion⁷."

Or take the personal application the Harvard student makes of the Darwinian theory:

“ Enough for me that Hilda’s here,
Enough that, having long survived
Pre-Eveic forms, she *has* arrived—
An illustration the completest
Of the survival of the sweetest¹⁸. ”

X

“ The Stillwater Tragedy ” is, like Charles Reade’s “ Put Yourself in his Place ”, an exposition of the tyranny of trades-unions and the injustice of strikes. He calls capital and labor the Siamese twins, and tells about a glib person disguised as The Workingman’s Friend,—no workingman himself, mind you, but a ghoul, that lives upon subscriptions, and sucks the senses out of innocent human beings⁸.

“ ‘ That’s a healthy idea of Torrini’s about dervidin’ up property,’ said Jemmy Willson. ‘ I’ve heerd it afore; but it’s sing’ler I never knowed a feller with any property to have that idea⁸. ’ ”

XI

It must be admitted that he gives his novels no local color. Portsmouth is the scene of most of his stories, but we feel no special acquaintance with it; "Rivermouth" might just as well have been Gloucester or Marblehead. Whether the scene be in Massachusetts or in Montana, the characters show that they were born in his library, and have never strayed out of his study. Evidently he has never associated much with persons outside his own charming but limited class, and he looks upon his characters, not through them. Naturally enough, therefore, he relies mainly upon incident, and takes delight in mysteries and surprises. "The Stillwater Tragedy" is what might be called a detective story, and the great charm of "Marjorie Daw" is that the reader shares John Flemming's consternation at its close. His most successful uncurtaining is when the Reverend Mr. Dillingham is uncovered as the gambler and thief George Nevins⁵.

He is happiest in his prose stories where

his fancy has fullest play, such as " Miss Mehitabel's Son ", " Mlle. Olympe Zabriski ", " A Christmas Fantasy ".

XII

Indeed his imagination even in his serious work is constantly reaching over the boundary of fancy. When he says:

" Through silence, gloom, and star-strown
paths of Night,
The breathless hours like phantoms stole
away²⁰,"

the imagination speaks; but it is fancy that says:

" And from the sombre midnight of her
hair
An ardent face out-looking, like a
star²⁰."

" As leaves turn into flame at the frost's
touch,
So Richard's heart on coldness fed its fire,
And burned with surfeit of indifference²⁰."

Or again:

" In the desperate struggle which took

place there between the moon and the gloom a hundred fantastic shadows slipped from coigne and cornice and fell into the street below, like the siegers flung from the ramparts of some old castle^{1 2}."

"What is there more cheerful now in the fall of the year than a wood-fire? Do you hear those little chirps and twitters coming out of their piece of apple-wood? Those are the ghosts of the robins and blue-birds that sang upon the bough when it was in blossom last spring²."

XIII

His fancy is much given to busying itself with sepulchres. He says: "I suppose that a taste for churchyards and cemeteries is a cultivated taste. At home they were entirely disconnected in my mind with any thought of enjoyment; but after a month on the other side I preferred a Metropolitan graveyard to almost any object of interest that could be presented to me^{1 2}."

In the church of the Capuchins, Rome, he looked at the carefully polished skulls of hundreds of monks as complacently as if

they had been a lot of exploded percussion caps. "It is a pity they can't be used again," he thought, and that was all¹². But he is often ghoulish. He speaks of "the huge, old-fashioned brass knocker, seemingly a brazen hand that had been cut off at the wrist, and nailed against the oak as a warning to malefactors⁶;" of a dead-cold dinner that he saw laid out yesterday⁹; and of "the office of Galignani in the Rue de Rivoli—the morgue in which the names of all foreign travellers are daily laid out for recognition⁷."

"Once or twice in the course of the evening the conversation flickered and went out curiously, as it was not in the habit of doing among these friends. When the talk turns cold in this it requires great tact to bury the corpse. Even with a gifted young divine to conduct the services the ceremony is not always a success⁵."

XIV

Of course his fancy and his humor are close friends.

"The captain grew so red in the face that

he reminded me of a scooped-out pumpkin with a lighted candle inside⁹."

"You can see with half an eye that he belongs to the Southern aristocracy, but he isn't eternally shinning up his genealogical tree. There's old Blythesburg, who is always perching himself on the upper branches and hurling down the cocoanuts of his ancestors at common folks⁵."

"I used to lie in the long grass and speculate on the advantages and disadvantages of being a cherub. I forget what I thought the advantages were, but I remember distinctly of getting into an inextricable tangle on two points; how could a cherub, being all head and wings, manage to sit down when he was tired⁹ ?"

XV

They often unite in epigram.

"Your father is what I call a belligerent non-combatant⁸."

"This workshop was full of—of your absence⁸."

"She is very handsome, and seems to be unconscious that she is conscious of it⁵."

“ The two fell to talking, as persons do who have nothing to say to each other, and possess the art of saying it³. ”

“ Though nothing occurs in Rivermouth without being known, a great many things are known there that never occur⁵. ”

“ She had fallen into so pitiable a state that this became her sole pleasure—to walk a mile and a quarter to a place where she could be thoroughly miserable⁵. ”

XVI

Though his prose-works much exceed his



WILLIAM WATSON, 1858-

poems in volume, the latter give him a higher rank among authors. The Atlantic has ranked him with Mr. Stedman as our two most honored living poets²⁷, and William

Watson wrote in answer to his sonnet “ On Reading ‘ The Purple East ’ ”:

“ Idle and churlish leagues ’twixt you **and**
me,
Singer most rich in charm, most rich in
grace !
What though I cannot see you **face to face?**
Allow my boast, that **one in blood are we!**
One by that secret consanguinity
Which binds the children of melodious
race,
And knows not the fortuities of place,
And cold interposition of the sea.
You are my noble kinsman in the lyre;
Forgive the kinsman’s freedom that I use,
Adventuring these imperfect thanks,
who late,
Singing a noisy woe in manner and in ire,—
Against me half the wise and **all the**
great,—
Sang not alone, for with me **was your**
Muse²⁹. ”

XVII

Stedman says:

“ To Aldrich, now in his sunny **prime—**
the most pointed and exquisite of our **lyrical**

craftsmen—justly is awarded a place at the head of the younger art-school. He is a poet of inborn tastes, a votary of the beautiful, and many of the delicately conceived pieces, that are unexcelled by modern work, were composed in a ruder time, and thus a forecast of the present technical advance. They illustrate the American instinct which unites the Saxon honesty of feeling to that artistic subtlety in which the French surpass the world. Though successful in a few poems of a more heroic cast, his essential skill and genius are found in briefer lyrics comparable to faultless specimens of the antique graver's art. His shorter tales and sketches are finished like so many poems in prose, sparkingly original, and delightful for the airy by-play, the refined nuances, of a captivating literary style. Among our novelists, however, Aldrich always seems the poet,—an author with whom song has the precedence. His tales are the prose of a poetic artist, and owe to this fact their airy charm³³."

XVIII

“His forte appears to be lyric poetry alone, and lyric poetry served in small instalments; and the noticeable brevity of these songs when considered in connection with their vividness of verbal coloring and their nearly faultless rhythm helps to produce the effect of an added grace, because it is a brevity always in keeping with the light and dainty loveliness of the thought expressed.

“Wholly out of the question seems a comparison between Mr. Aldrich’s work and that of any dead master, unless we except perhaps Keats and Herrick. * * * Where the influence of Keats is manifest seems only to be in a love for colors and the blending of colors—the passion to write as an artist paints and to use words as an artist uses pigments²⁴.”

“Possessing a vocabulary rich as an Oriental jewel-box, he yields to the temptation to make of his Muse a wearer of gems when she should be a spirit and a wandering vision. Perhaps as a consequence of this the

verse sometimes lacks the high nervous organization which the occasion demands²⁷.”

XIX

Like Bryant, he is still best known by a poem written while he was in his 'teens—*Baby Bell*¹³. It begins:

BABY BELL

Have you not heard the poets tell
How came the dainty *Baby Bell*
Into this world of ours ?
The gates of heaven were left ajar :
With folded hands and dreamy eyes,
Wandering out of Paradise,
She saw this planet, like a star,
Hung in the glistening depths of even—
Its bridges, running to and fro,
O'er which the white-winged Angels go,
Bearing the holy Dead to heaven.
She touched a bridge of flowers—those feet,
So light they did not bend the bells
Of the celestial asphodels,
They fell like dew upon the flowers :
Then all the air grew strangely sweet.
And thus came dainty *Baby Bell*
Into this world of ours.

XX

His descriptions of nature are always delightful.

“ Now no sound was, save when a dry twig
snapped
And rustled softly down from bough to
bough²⁰. ”

He speaks of cows with their lazy eyes,
and moist, india-rubber noses⁷.

“ While yet no bird had moved
A wing in its dim nest, the wakeful prince
Rose from the couch²². ”

“ Now the sanguine moon,
To clouded opal changing momentarily,
Rose sheer above the pine-trees’ ragged
edge²⁰. ”

“ Ev’n so the Spring
Unclasps the girdle of its loveliness
Abruptly in the North here: long the drifts
Linger in hollows, long on bough and briar
No slight leaf ventures, lest the frost’s keen
touch

Nip it, and then all suddenly the earth
Is naught but scent and bloom²⁰. ”

XXI

Of his personality, Mr. William H. Bishop says: "He is a social genius, and understands the arts of good fellowship. Good things abound even more if possible in his talk than in his writings. Every acquaintance of his will give you a list of happy scintillations his wit and humor. There is nothing of the recluse by nature in Aldrich; nothing either of the conventional cut of poet or sage in his aspect. He is now somewhat thick set. He is blonde and of middle height; he has features that lend themselves easily to the humorous play of his fancy; the ends of his mustache, pointed somewhat in the French manner, seem to accentuate with a certain fitness and *chic* the quips and cranks which so often issue from beneath it. Mentally Aldrich seems Yankee crossed with the Frenchman. In the matter of literary finish he is refined by fastidiousness of taste to the last degree. He is a man of strong likes and dislikes; it would sometimes seem fair to call them

almost prejudices. In his work he has scarcely any morbid side. He is the celebrator of everything bright and charming, of things opalescent and rainbow hued, of pretty women, roses, jewels, humming-bird and oriole, of the blue sky and sea, and the daintiest romance of the daintiest spots of foreign climes. If man invented the arts to please,—as can hardly be denied,—few can be called more truly in the vein of art than Thomas Bailey Aldrich²²."

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Joel Chandler Harris

DECEMBER 9

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

I

Like Mr. Aldrich Mr. Harris has given under the form of a story the main incidents of his early life. "On the Plantation" he calls a story of a Georgia boy's adventures during the war, and investigation shows that in all essential particulars the story follows very closely his own experiences.

He was born in Eatonton, in middle Georgia, Dec. 9, 1848, and what little school education he got was from Eatonton academy. He used to hang around the country store, which was also the post-office, and occasionally he had a chance to look at the newspapers, which were laid out for the various subscribers. In this way he became acquainted with *The Countryman*, a news-

paper published on a plantation not far away, printed from a small store of type on a hand press, and yet with a circulation of 2,000. It happened that the editor of *The Countryman* wanted a boy to assist him. Young Harris, then fourteen years old, applied and got the place.

II

He remained there until the paper was suspended through the commotion caused by Sherman's march to the sea, after which he became a compositor on the *Macon Daily Telegraph*. Then he went to New Orleans as private secretary of the editor of the *Crescent Monthly*, and he began to write paragraphs for the city press there about the time that George W. Cable was trying his hand at the same kind of work. The *Crescent Monthly* waned, and Mr. Harris came back to Georgia as editor of the *Forsyth Advertiser*, where he also set most of the type, worked off the edition on a hand press, and wrapped and directed his papers for the mail. His editorials attracted attention, and in 1871 he was called to a place

on the Savannah Daily News. In September, 1876, the yellow fever epidemic drove him back to Atlanta, where he became an editor of the Constitution³².

III

This journal had already begun to acquire more than a local reputation by its stories in humorous negro dialect written by S. W. Small, under the name of "Old Si", and Mr. Harris was asked to furnish sketches to take the place of these; so under the name of "Uncle Remus", he made an old negro whom he had known on the Turner place, where *The Countryman* was published, the spokesman in several character sketches. Presently he began a series of stories in a new vein, embodying the negro folklore tales of Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox. These sketches were widely copied all over the country, and made for Mr. Harris a national reputation. The slight but strong frame in which the old negro's portrait was set, the playful propinquity of smiles and tears, and the fresh humor and absolute novelty of the folklore tales, existing as a hidden treasure

in the South, were revealed for the first time to critical admiration³².

IV

The setting of these stories is of the simplest. There is only an old negro, and a little boy who likes to hear stories; but they are fancies as uncouth as the original man ever conceived of⁴.

They go back to the time when the animals could talk, when they wore clothes, and mixed in a curious way with Miss Meadows and her daughters. In his essay on "Reynard the Fox" Froude has pointed out the sympathy that man always has for the intellectually cunning, but in these stories it is not the fox that outwits, but the rabbit; it is not valor that triumphs but helplessness, not malice but mischievousness².

Mr. Harris says it needs no scientific investigation to show why the negro selects as his hero the weakest and most harmless of all animals, and brings him out victorious in contests with the bear, the wolf, and the fox⁹.

“ Shoo ! ” said Mink, dat Injun rabbit. Nigger rabbit would 'a fooled them creeturs right straight along, an' he wouldn't 'a been cotch, nudder¹. ”

V

One of the best known is the following:
THE WONDERFUL TAR-BABY STORY

“ Didn't the fox *never* catch the rabbit, Uncle Remus ? ” asked the little boy the next evening.

“ He come mighty nigh it, honey, sho's you born—Brer Fox did. One day atter Brer Rabbit fool 'im wid dat calamus root, Brer Fox went ter wuk en got 'im some tar, en mix it wid some turkentime, en fix up a contrapshun wat he call a Tar-Baby, en he tuck dish yer Tar-Baby en he sot 'er in de big road, en den he lay off in de bushes fer to see wat de news wuz gwineter be. En he didn't hatter wait long, nudder, kaze bimeby here come Brer Rabbit pacin' down de road—lippity-clippity, clippity-lippity—dez ez sassy ez a jay-bird. Brer Fox, he lay low. Brer Rabbit come prancin' 'long twel he spy de Tar-Baby, en den he fotch

up on his behime legs like he wuz 'stonished. De Tar-Baby, she sot dar, she did, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

“ ‘ Mawnin’ ! ’ sez Brer Rabbit, sezee—
‘ nice wedder dis mawnin’ , ’ sezee.

“ ‘ Tar-Baby ain’t sayin’ nothin’ , en Brer Fox, he lay low.

“ ‘ How duz yo’ sym’tums seem ter se-gashuate ? ’ sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

“ Brer Fox, he wink his eye slow, en lay low, en de Tar-Baby, she ain’t sayin’ nothin’.

“ ‘ How you come on, den ? Is you deaf ? ’ sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. ‘ Kaze if you is, I kin holler louder, ’ sezee.

“ ‘ Tar-Baby stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

“ ‘ Youer stuck up, dat’s w’at you is,’ says Brer Rabbit, sezee, ‘ en I’m gwineter kyore you, dat’s w’at I’m a gwineter do,’ sezee.

“ Brer Fox, he sorter chuckle in his stum-muck, he did, but Tar-Baby ain’t sayin’ nothin’.

“ ‘ I’m gwineter larn you howter talk ter ‘specttubble folks ef hit’s de las’ ack,’ sez

Brer Rabbit, sezee. 'Ef you don't take off dat hat en tell me howdy, I'm gwineter bus' you wide open,' sezee.

"Tar-Baby stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"Brer Rabbit keep on axin' 'im, en de Tar-Baby, she keep on sayin' nothin', twel present'y Brer Rabbit draw back wid his fis', he did, en blip he tuck 'er side er de head. Right dar's whar he broke his merlasses jug. His fis' stuck, en he can't pull loose. De tar hilt 'im. But Tar-Baby, she stay still, en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'Ef you don't lemme loose, I'll knock you agin,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, en wid dat he fotch 'er a wipe wid de udder han', en dat stuck. Tar-Baby, she ain't sayin' nothin', en Brer Fox, he lay low.

"'Tu'n me loose, fo' I kick de natal stuffin' outen you,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, but de Tar-Baby, she ain't sayin' nothin'. She des hilt on, en den Brer Rabbit lose de use er his feet in de same way. Brer Fox, he lay low. Den Brer Rabbit squall out dat ef de Tar-Baby don't tu'n 'im loose he butt

'er cranksided. En den he butted, en his head got stuck. Den Brer Fox, he sa'n-tered fort', lookin' des ez innercent ez one er yo' mammy's mockin'-birds.

" 'Howdy, Brer Rabbit,' sez Brer Fox, sezee. ' You look sorter stuck up dis maw-nin', ' sezee, en den he rolled on de groun', en laughed en laughed twel he couldn't laugh no mo'. ' I speek you'll take dinner wid me dis time, Brer Rabbit. I done laid in some calamus root, en I ain't gwineter take no skuse,' sez Brer Fox, sezee."

Here Uncle Remus paused, and drew a two-pound yam out of the ashes.

" Did the fox eat the rabbit ? " asked the little boy to whom the story had been told.

" Dat's all de fur de tale goes," replied the old man. " He mout, en den agin he moutent. Some say Jedge B'ar come 'long en loosed 'im—some say he didn't. I hear Miss Sally callin'. You better run 'long'."

VI

These stories were actual legends current among the negroes, and were given in the simple but picturesque language of the negro

just as the negroes tell them. It was not altogether easy to gather them.

“Curiously enough,” Mr. Harris says, “I have found few negroes who will acknowledge to a stranger that they know anything of these legends; and yet to relate one of the stories is the surest road to their confidence and esteem. In this way, and in this way only, I have been enabled to collect and verify the folklore included in this volume. * * *

“Each legend has its variants, but in every instance I have retained that particular virtue which seemed to me to be the most characteristic, and have given it without embellishment and without exaggeration².”

VII

He adds that the dialect is wholly different from that of the Hon. Pompey Smash and his literary descendants. It is different also from the intolerable misrepresentations of the minstrel stage, but it is at least phonetically genuine. “Nevertheless, if the language of Uncle Remus fails to give vivid hints of the really poetic imagination

of the negro; if it fails to embody the quaint and homely humor which was his most prominent characteristic; if it does not suggest a certain picturesque sensitiveness—a curious exaltation of mind and temperament not to be defined by words—then I have reproduced the form of the dialect merely, and not the essence, and my attempt may be accounted failure².”

VIII

When he was advised by his publishers that “Uncle Remus” was to be included in their catalogue of humorous publications, he was careful to say that however humorous it might be in effect its intention was perfectly serious².

In his early volumes Mr. Harris spoke of them as contributions to folklore, and generalized somewhat upon them; but later he said: “The folklore branch of the subject I gladly leave to those who think they know something about it. My own utter ignorance I confess without a pang. To know that you are ignorant is a valuable form of knowledge, and I am gradually accumulating a vast store of it. In the light of this:

knowledge the enterprising inconsequence of the introduction to 'Nights with Uncle Remus', is worth noting on account of its unconscious and harmless humor. I knew a good deal more about comparative folklore than I know now, and the whole affair is carried off with remarkable gravity. Since that introduction was written I have gone far enough into the subject, (by the aid of those who are Fellows of This and Professors of That, to say nothing of Doctors of the Other) to discover that at the end of investigation and discussion Speculation stands grinning⁴."

IX

It must be confessed that Mr. Harris is most successful when he most closely reproduces. In his "Little Mr. Thimblefinger", where he is not sure that some of the stories are negro stories, where some are middle Georgia folklore stories, some belong to England, and some are merely inventions, it may safely be said that the inventions do not add to his reputation. The story of "The Witch of the Well"²⁸ is not health-

ful; that of "The Three Ivory Bobbins"²⁸ is stupid. The only thing that redeems this volume is the portrait of Drusilla, a thoroughly genuine darkey girl.

"You kin nod," said Drusilla defiantly, "but my head got mo' in it dan you kin comb out."

"I done seed ez much ez I want ter see," replied Drusilla, "an' now I want ter live ter tell it."

"Don't come follerin' attar me! Drusilla cried, "Kase ef you do, you'l sho git hurted. I ain't done nuthin' 't all ter you. I ain't gwine ter pester you, an' I ain't gwine ter let you pester me. I tell you dat now, so you'll know what ter 'pen' on."

X

Much the same criticism must be passed on his only novel, "Sister Jane", which as a novel deserves no high rank, and yet is noteworthy for its strong character-sketch of Sister Jane herself, who said "A man's no more to me than a jay-bird. I hear a flutter in the chaney-berry tree, and look up and see a jay-bird. I hear somebody step-


ping along as big as if he owned the town, and I look up and see a man. The bird hops off and the man walks on. Out of sight, out of mind." And again: "When I'm in trouble I'm like a hen a-layin', I don't want nobody to stan' aroun' and watch me."

There are also delicious bits, like Mandy's description of how she came to become engaged, and powerful episodes, like the interview between Bud and Mandy Satterlee. He even has the boldness to imitate in Jincy the fools of Shakspeare. "Well'm," he says "it's so easy to have what folks call sense, that I ease my mind by playin' the fool²⁷"; and again "Some's rambled, some's ambled, some's took to their bed, an' some's dead²⁷."

XI

Clarence Bullard is an amplification somewhat of Berrien Cozart, in "Balaam and His Master", a sketch something in the manner of Bret Harte. The senile Grandsir Roach in the beginning chapter hardly corresponds with

sentiment at the close: "Charity! why, William, what does Paul say? Look it up in the Bible! Why, take charity out'n religion an' what in the name of common sense would be left? Nothin' but the dry peelin's. It'd be like takin' corn out'n the shuck. Shucks'll maybe do for steers an' dry cattle, an' they're mighty poor ruffage e'en for them; but you give shucks to creeturs what's got any sense an' they'll snort at 'em an' walk away from the trough. Why, William, a man that reely knows he's got a soul for to save is bound by his own sins to be charitable when it comes to t'other folks's sins²⁷."

He is undoubtedly speaking of himself when he makes William Wornum say: "The knack of narration belongs to the gifted few, who need neither art nor practice to fit them for the work.  With me all is lacking. When the impressive moment arrives the apt and trenchant word eludes me. The sparkling phrase, the vivid grouping, and the illumination that flashes the whole scene upon the mind, are wanting²⁷."

XII

But if he lacks imagination, what he has seen he has seen closely and can describe vividly. His pictures of Georgia life are for this people what Mr. Cable's sketches are for the Creoles. Of the central Georgia countryman he says: "The next time you see him, he'll be driving a yoke of steers, hitched to a big wagon, and in the wagon he'll have three pounds of white frothy butter, two dozen eggs, and a half dozen sickly chickens. He'll exchange these for eight yards of calico, a hank of yarn, a plug of tobacco, and a bottle of Maccaboy snuff²⁷."

There is a powerful description of the just anger of a poor white when Mrs. Fera-tia Bivins towers over Emily Wornum⁵, and "At Teague Poteet's"²⁸ is one of the finest bits of character-drawing in fiction. There are little glimpses like this: "The day after the invitations had been sent around, a couple of weanling pigs were caught and penned, and, until the day before Christmas, they were fed and fattened

on nubbins and roasted white-oak acorns^{1 5} ;” while Mr. Pruitt’s story gives the southern dialect of middle Georgia to perfection¹.

XIII

No small value is added to these stories by their giving from the boy’s point of view the experiences of the South during the war, when for coffee there were various substitutes: sweet potatoes chipped and dried, parched meal, parched rye, parched okra-seeds, and sassafras tea. Joe’s beverage was water sweetened with sorghum-sirup, and he found it a very refreshing and wholesome drink¹. There is a touching picture of men conscripted into the army whose families were neglected, so that the men had to desert to look after them¹.

As editor of the *Constitution* he was a strong factor in the acceptance at the South of the results of the war. In one of his books he says: “ Here is a horrible war that shall redeem a nation, that shall restore civilization, that shall establish Christianity. Here is a university of slavery that shall lead the savage to citizenship^{1 1}. ” He knows

too how to be sarcastic. "And Joe never knew till long after that politics could be a crime. He thought that politics consisted partly in newspaper articles signed 'A Subscriber', and 'Many Citizens', and 'Vox Populi', and 'Scrutator'; partly in arguments between the men who sat in fine weather on the dry goods boxes under the china-trees¹."

XIV

It is doubtful whether the character and position of the Southern slaves has ever been so sympathetically portrayed as in his books. The story of "Mink"¹ was no doubt true, so far as it represented young Harris as having that kindly feeling for the negroes which gave him unusual hold upon their confidence.

We are apt to forget the dog-like fidelity of the old negroes like Balaam⁹, who clung to his worthless master, though he knew that he would be sold at auction whenever his master was short of money; Mingo⁵, who started to take advantage of his freedom, but found himself in dreams compelled to.

go back and take care of his little baby master; and Free Betsy²⁷, who slept in a wretched trundle-bed and kept free from any touch the bed she saved for her mistress who might sometime come to her for refuge.

When Blue Dave's mistress is dying she says: "The carriage moves smoothly along. Is David driving?"

"Tant po' Dave, Mistiss! De good Lord done tuck holt er de lines⁷."

XV

Never was the attitude of the faithful negro slave more touchingly portrayed than in this prayer of Uncle Manuel⁷:

"Saviour en Marster er de worl '! draw nigh dis night en look down into dis ole nigger's heart; lissen ter de humblest er de humble. Blessed Marster! some run wild en some go stray, some go hether en some go yan; but all un um mus' go befo' dy mercy-seat in de een'. Some'll fetch big works en some'll fetch great deeds, but po' ole Manuel won't fetch nothin' but one weak, sinful heart. Dear, blessed Marster! look in dat heart en see w'at in dar. De

sin dat’s dar, Lord, blot it out wid dy wounded han’. Dear Marster, bless my little Mistiss. Her comin’s en her gowines is des like one er dy angels er mercy; she scatters bread en meat ’mong’s dem w’at’s lonesome in der ways, en dem w’at runs up en down in de middle er big tribulation. Saviour! Marster! look down ’pon my little Mistiss; gedder her ’nead dy hev’mly wings. Ef trouble mus’ come, let it come ’pon me. I’m ole, but I’m tough; I’m ole, but I got de strenk. Lord! let de troubles en de trials come ’pon de ole nigger w’at kin stan’ um, en save my little Mistiss fum sheddin’ one tear. En den, at de las’ fetch us all home ter hev’m, whar dey’s res’ fer de w’ary. Amen.”

XVI

Of course he does not fail to see the humorous side of negro character. The Uncle Remus stories are full of imitations of the sounds of animals, and there is onomatopoeia in this line.

“ De jug, he guggle out *good-good-good*⁴. “
Here is a sketch appropriate to the sea 1:

"What is it?" asked Wattie, drawing a little closer to Harbert.

"Pshaw! I know what it is," said Willie, "it's sleet." Harbert shook his head gravely as he gazed in the fire.

"It mought be," he said, "an' den agin it moughtn't. It mought be ole Sandy Claus sorter skirmishin' roun' feelin' his way."

"Trufe, too," said Aunt Crissy, falling in with the idea. "He moughtn't want to skeer nobody, so he des let folks b'lieve tain't nothin' but sleet. Dey tells me dat ole man Sandy Claus is monstus slick."

"He bleedze ter be slick," remarked Harbert, "kaze I bin livin' yere, off an' on, a mighty long time, an' I ain't saw 'im yit. An' I let you know hit got ter be a mighty slick man dat kin dodge me all dis time. He got to be bofe slick an' peart."

"Yasser," said Aunt Crissy, holding her apron up by the corner, and looking at it thoughtfully, "he slick fer true. He light 'pon top er der house same ez a jay-bird, an' dey ain't no scufflin' when he slide down de chimberly."

“Dey sez,” said Harbert, in a reminiscent way—“dey sez dat he rubs hisse’f wid goose-grease fer ter make he j’int’s limber an’ loose; when he got dis yere grease on ’im dey can’t nobody ketch ’im, kaze he’d slip right out’n der han’s.”

“I speck dat’s so,” said Aunt Crissy, “kase one time when I wuz livin’ wid Marse Willyum Henry an’ sleepin’ in de house in time er Chris’mas, I tuck’n he’p’d de chil-lun hang up der stockin’s. After dey all got ter bed, I sot by de fier a-noddin’. How long I sot dar I’ll never tell you, but all of a sudden I yeard a turrible racket. I gun a jump, I did, an’ open my eyes. De outside do’ wuz open, an’ stannin’ dar wuz one er Marse Willyum Henry’s houn’ dogs. He stood dar, he did, wid his bristles up, an’ dar in de middle er the flo’ wuz de ole cat. Her back wuz all bowed up, an’ her tail ” —here Aunt Crissy paused and looked all around the room as if in search of something with which to compare the old cat’s tail—“I ain’t tellin’ you no lie; dat cat tail wuz bigger ’roun’ dan my arm!”

"I don't 'spute it," exclaimed Harbert, with fervor, "dat I don't."

"An' dat ain't all." Aunt Crissy closed her eyes and threw her head back, as if to add emphasis to what she was about to say. "Dat ain't all—dem ar stockin's wuz done fullled up wid goodies, an' dey wuz done fullled up whilst I wuz a-settin' right dar." No style of type has yet been invented that would convey even a faint idea of the impressive tone in which Aunt Crissy made this startling announcement.

"Ole Sandy wuz gittin' you in close quarters, mon," exclaimed Harbert.

"Man, you er talkin' now," said Aunt Crissy. "I wuz settin' right spang at de fier-place," she went on, describing her position with appropriate gestures, "an' I could er des retched out my han'—so—an' totched de stockin's, an' fullled um up right fo' my face. Ef my eyes had er des bin open I'd a seed 'im, an' ef I'd a seed 'im, I'd a grabbed 'im right by de coat-tail. Yasser! I'd a grabbed 'im ef he'd a kyar'd me up de chimberly¹."

XVII

He reproduces a good many of the negro-songs, such as the well-known revival song:

REVIVAL HYMN

Oh, whar shill we go w'en de great day
comes,

Wid de blowin' er de trumpits en de bang-
in' er de drums ?

How many po' sinners'll be kotched out late
En fine no latch ter de golden gate ?

No use fer ter wait twel ter-morrer!

De sun musn't set on yo' sorrer,

Sin's ez sharp ez a bamboo-brier—

Oh, Lord! fetch de mo'ners up higher²!

He also gives the song of which the first stanza is the following, which with some variations was a familiar rhyme to the writer in his boyhood days.

“ Do, please, marster, don't ketch me,

Katch dat nigger behime dat tree;

He stole money en I stole none,

Put him in de calaboose des for fun⁴!

XVIII

His writings show a love of nature and a

sympathy with her creatures almost like Thoreau's. Here is a boyhood picture of a partridge's nest:

“ A partridge and her mate built their nest within a few feet of the window, and it happened that Joe often neglected his work in watching the birds. They bent the long grass over from each side carefully until they had formed a little tunnel three or four feet long. When this was done Mrs. Partridge made her way to the end of it and began to scratch and flutter just as a hen does when taking a dust bath. She was hollowing out her nest. By the time the nest was completed the archway of grass that had hid it was considerably disarranged. Then Mrs. Partridge sat quietly on the little hollow she had made, while Mr. Partridge re-built the archway over her, until she was completely concealed. He was very careful about this. Frequently he would walk off a little way, and turn and look at the nest. If his sharp eyes could see anything suspicious he would return, and weave the grass more closely together. Finally he seemed to be satisfied with his

work,—shook his wings and began to preen himself, and then Mrs. Partridge came out and joined him. They consulted together with queer little cluckings, and finally ran off together under the undergrowth as if bent on a frolic¹ ”.

XIX

Young Harris had strange sympathy with animals of all kinds, especially horses and dogs; which he thinks so much an element of a kindly character that he makes Jincy say: “ If Miss Mary’d go out in the woods and sorter git use to things out there, she’d soon have the birds a-flyin’ after her, and all the wil’ creeturs a-foller-in’ her. She’s got the ways, and she’d soon git the knack²⁷. ”

Jim-Polk Gaither knew where the wild strawberries grew, and the chincapins and chestnuts, and where the muscadines, or as he called them, the “ bullaces ”, were ripest. The birds could not hide their nest from him, nor the wild creatures escape him. He had a tame buzzard that sometimes followed him about in his rambles. He set traps for flying squirrels, and tamed

them as soon as his hands touched them.. He handled snakes fearlessly, and his feats with them were astounding to the town lad until Joe discovered that the serpents were not of the poisonous species. In handling highland moccasins and spreading adders, Jim-Polk confined his feats to seizing them by their tails as they ran and snapping their heads off. Whenever he killed one in this way he always hung it on a bush or tree, in order, as he said, to bring rain. Once when the two lads were walking through the woods they saw a pair of hawks some distance away. Jim-Polk motioned to Joe to hide under a hawthorn bush. Then, doubling his handkerchief before his mouth, he began to make a curious noise—a series of smothered exclamations that sounded like hoo!-hoo.-hoo-hoo! He was imitating the cry of the swamp owl, which Joe Maxwell had never heard. The imitation must have been perfect, for immediately there was a great commotion in the woods..

The smaller birds fluttered away and disappeared; but the two hawks, re-enforced by a third, came flying toward the noise with:

their feathers ruffled and screaming with indignation¹.

XX

No better arbor day exercise was ever written than in the pages in which Jincy²⁷ gives the reason why he did not cut down tree after tree, as he had intended. Not that young Harris had any sentimental disinclination to kill animals; he used to sell three dozen rabbit skins a week¹ and his stories of hunting coons and foxes are among his best. He said the fox hunt seemed to combine all the elements of health and pleasure in out-door life¹.

XXI

While in his Uncle Remus books he has subordinated his personality, in his other books there are continual reflections by which one may see the working of his own mind. For instance about the time he was forty, which Victor Hugo says is the old age of youth, while fifty is the youth of old age, he wrote as follows: "Say what you will, there is a wide gap between twenty and thirty odd when these numbers mark the years. There is a wider gap still between

a girl of nineteen and twenty, full of life and the joy of living, and an old man of thirty-five or forty, who begins to look backward instead of forward, and who sighs for the days that are gone instead of fixing expectation on those that are to come²⁷."

This remark might refer to himself:

"Teague Poteet had the trait of gentleness, which frequently sweetens and equalizes large natures⁶." He says: "When wit and tenderness go into partnership in the same mind the product is humor²⁷." And he knows this distinction.

"Why you laugh at 'im yourself, Brother Roach."

"Not me, Brother Crosby, not me! I laugh wi' 'im, but that's bekaze I can't he'p myse'f, he's so nimble wi' his tongue²⁷."

XXII

He makes a good many sententious remarks about women.

"Philip Woodward had never made any special study of the female mind, because, like most young men of sanguine temperament, he was convinced that he thoroughly understood it⁸."

“He had not the remotest conception of the tragical, which in spite of social training or the lack of it, controls and gives strength and potency to feminine emotions. Knowing nothing of this Woodward knew nothing of women⁸.”

“Sister Jane was a constant surprise to me, as all women are to those who try to please them²⁷.”

“Wimmen is mighty quare; you don’t know one minnit what they’re a-gwine to do the next. An’ no wonder—bekaze they don’t know their self what they’re a-gwine to do²⁷.”

“Even the women and little children loved her, and when this kind of manifestation is made over a girl it is needless to inquire about her character or disposition¹⁵.”

“If she wan’t a-comin’ she was a-gwine; an’ not a bit ’er trouble, not the least bit. She could tease and yit not pester.”

“That’s the fact truth,” remarked Grand-sir Roach—“it shorely is. It’s the way of some gals,” he went on, turning to me. “They can be allers in the way apperiently an’ yit not pester you²⁷.”

"I could but remark how, even in the midst of his penitence, that he seemed to regard his own trouble and his own misery as of more importance than all other troubles and miseries put together. It is the way of the world, especially the way of man. I have seen women who could put their own troubles aside to sympathize with the miseries of others, but I have never seen one of my own sex who had the courage or the generous impulse to make the attempt²⁷."

XXIII

Erastus Brainerd says: "In person Mr.



JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

Harris has few peculiarities; in stature he is of the average height of the people of the eastern and middle States. The northern papers have spoken of Mr. Cable as a

little man. He and Mr. Harris are about

of a size, which is not much excelled in their section except by the lank giants of the mountains. His features are small, his face is tanned and freckled, his mouth is covered by a stubbly red mustache, and his eyes are small and blue. Both his eyes and mouth are extremely mobile, sensitive and expressive.

“There is probably no living man more truly diffident, but his diffidence is the result of excessive sympathy and tenderness, which cause the bright blue eyes to well up at any bit of pathos just as they fairly sparkle with humor.

“His amusements and tastes are few and simple. His constant companions are Shakspeare, Job, St. Paul and Ecclesiastes*. He never goes into society or to the theatre. He once acted as dramatic critic of the Constitution, but his misery at being obliged to see and criticise dull actors was so acute that he soon resigned the position.

“The small talk of society has no attractions for him. His home is enough. When

* William Wornum names as his books the Bible, Shakspeare, Montaigne, and Sir Thomas Browne²⁷.

his children are tired and sleepy and have gone to bed, he writes at the fireside where they have been sitting. So strong is his domestic instinct, that although he had a room built especially as a study, he soon deserted its lonely cheerfulness for the comforts of his home, where his tender and kindly nature makes him loved by everyone³²."

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